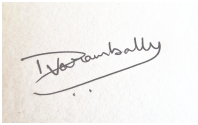
Tradition to Stage:

The Institutionalisation Narrative of Kathakali



Discover India Program 2023-24

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Abstract

Kathakali is a centuries old dance drama form that has been through many evolutions before it cemented itself as one of the most recognisable cultural exports of this country. This project examines Kathakali as it went from declining dance form to mainstay of Indian culture with international notoriety and the role that institutionalisation plays in this journey. Our research took us to the Kerala Kalamandalam where we studied the impact of institutionalisation on the standardisation of the dance form, both within the state and around the country, its effect on pedagogy and the spread of Kathakali. We conducted unstructured and semi structured interviews of different interest groups including students, professors and management. From the responses we concluded that the Kalamandalam exerts great influence over the dance form and affects all aspects of Kathakali such as dance technique, makeup and costumes, and source material. The institution also has an impact on teaching methods and the reach of the dance form at an international level.

Keywords: *Classical dance, Institutionalisation, Pedagogy, Kathakali*

Chapter 1



Introduction

Kathakali is an Indian classical dance form originating in the state of Kerala. Emerging in the 17th century, what started as a religious dance for Lord Krishna called Krishnattam has evolved to become Kathakali as we know it today. Aspects of the dance form draw from the Sanskrit Hindu text Natyashastra, specifically the parts that discuss facial expressions and how they create meaning. The performances are usually based on stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and other ancient Indian texts. This dance form is also known for its emphasis on intricate face makeup in order to properly express the emotions of the characters that the dancers are portraying. Today, Kathakali is well institutionalised, not only across parts of India but also globally.

The current state of this art form can be traced back to efforts from Kerala Kalamandalam, which set the forefront for its institutionalisation in the 1930s. The Kerala Kalamandalam is an institution that was established in the 1930's by the eminent poet *Vallathol Narayana Menon.* In 1941, Kalamandalam was given over to government control, eventually becoming a state-run academy of arts. The institution aims to give teaching and training in higher education that will foster creativity and excellence in the traditional Keralan performing arts, such as Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Kutiyattam, Thullal, and Panchavadyam, among others. It further promotes and spreads the knowledge of Kerala's cultural heritage, particularly in connection to the theory and practice of the traditional performing arts. A defining aspect of the Kerala Kalamandalam is its aim to preserve and perpetuate *Gurukulasampradaya*, which is the traditional system of learning, in harmony with the modern system of training & research.

1.1 Research Questions and Objectives

For this project, we aim to study the institutionalisation of Kathakali by the Kerala Kalamandalam, and the impact that this has had on the art form. For this, our research questions are:

- What is the significance of Kerala Kalamandalam in the institutionalisation of Kathakali?

- To what extent has institutionalisation of Kathakali contributed to the progression of Kathakali to what it is today?
- How has the institutionalisation of Kathakali at the Kerala Kalamandalam evolved over the years?

Through these questions, we aim to gain insight about the progression of Kathakali from a dying art form to an internationally recognised art form over time. We aim to study this specifically through the lens of the impact of the Kerala Kalamandalam on the dance form.

1.2 Rationale and Scope of Study

Kathakali has progressed from a dying art form to one that is now receiving international recognition. This resurgence of Kathakali is what led to us choosing this research topic. We believe that one of the causes of this rise is due to institutionalisation, which is why we want to understand how the Kalamandalam's approach to teaching Kathakali has revitalised the art form. It is relevant today because Kalamandalam is one of the few institutions to bring about a method and discipline to the art form other than it being handed down from one generation to another. A defining aspect of the Kerala Kalamandalam is its aim to preserve and perpetuate *Gurukulasampradaya*, which is the traditional system of learning, in harmony with the modern system of training & research.

The participants in our group either have a surface-level understanding or only know the art form by name and picture. One of the main reasons for picking Kathakali is to further improve all of our collective understanding of the art form. An understanding of the art form's perseverance and metamorphosis in recent times will help us in understanding how something of such cultural importance can withstand the test of time. Kathakali also has multiple aspects to it, including the make-up, costumes, facial expressions and hand gestures. All aspects of the art form from the spectrum of colours, to the details into the choreography and costumes, to the stories depicted through the vocals and music, are all specific to Kathakali. Looking further into Kathakali will help us understand all of the above, while also giving us insights into people practicing the art form and the people involved in the culture.

We have two major areas of focus and some more broad areas. The focus areas are Kathakali the art form, and the Kalamandalam, which has adopted an institutionalised approach in teaching the art form. The broad areas of focus are the communities impacted through Kathakali, like the artisans, costume designers, and the instrumentalists. The other broad regions of focus are the tourists who come to visit the Kalamandalam, its artists, and also the gurukul system merged with modern educational techniques that the institute adopts while teaching its students.

Chapter 2



Background and History

Kathakali is an Indian classical dance form originating in the state of Kerala. It was originally taught as the Kalluvazhi Chitta style of dance at the now-closed Olappamanna Mana in Vellinezhi, Kerala. The name ‘Kathakali’ translates to ‘story play’. It is a dance entirely based on hand, facial, and body movements. It is said to have been influenced by Hindu prayer rituals like Theyyam, which are assumed to be around 2000 years old (Shreyanjana, 2023).

Kathakali started as Ramanattam, which was created when the king of Kottakara created performances based on stories from Lord Ram’s life. The art form then evolved and started to incorporate performances that were drawn from the Mahabaratha and other similar texts, making the name Ramanttam inappropriate. Thus, the name of the dance form became Kathakali (‘The Birth of Kathakali’, n.d.). Aspects of the dance form draw from another dance form called Koodiyattam (Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, n.d.) and also the Sanskrit Hindu text Natyashastra (‘Kathakali’, n.d.) specifically the parts that discuss facial expressions and how they create meaning. The dance form is known for its emphasis on intricate face makeup in order to properly express the emotions of the characters that the dancers are portraying.

At the end of the 17th century Kathakali troupes called the *Kalioyogams* came into existence, these were crucial factors that ensured the survival of the art form when it went into decline (‘The Birth of Kathakali’, n.d.).

This decline happened because of transitioning political systems. In pre-colonial times, art forms such as Kathakali were sustained due to royal patronage wherein Kings would provide artists with room and board in exchange for performances at the royal court. After the arrival of the British and the subsequent weakening of the royals, artists lost this patronage, losing money and the ability to sustain the practice of their art forms (Amir, 2015). This is what also happened to Kathakali.

The Kerala Kalamandalam was established in the 1930’s by the eminent poet Vallathol Narayana Menon with a goal to revive interest in the art form. In 1941, Kalamandalam was given over to government control, eventually becoming a state-run academy of arts. The resurgence of the art of Kathakali in modern-day Kerala can be attributed mostly to Vallathol's international

tours between 1950 and 1953 (Mahmud, 1994). Now, Kathakali as an art form is recognised, performed, and taught all around the world. This is what piqued the interest of our group. We want to understand both the art form and the teaching of the same.

A defining aspect of the Kerala Kalamandalam is its aim to preserve and perpetuate *Gurukulasampradhayam*, in which the students live with a teacher and spend years directly under their tutelage. To adapt to modern times, this has been modified, taking the residential system, but letting go of the practice of having just one teacher teach the students over several years. In the Kalamandalam, the students live near their classes, and are expected to spend most of their days practicing, but the teachers do not live in the same vicinity. The closeness between teachers and students from the old system has been maintained through different means, mainly through smaller class sizes. This fosters a personal connection between the students and their teachers, following the *Gurukulasampradhayam*.

The Kalamandalam offers a formal platform to learn Kathakali, and provides opportunities to pursue the art form professionally. The existence of the Kalamandalam also contributes to the documentation and research into the art form. Additionally, it increases the exposure a student gets after learning Kathakali by popularising it and allowing more access to it both nationally and internationally. Hence, to learn more about this impact, reach and conservation of this age-old art form, we picked this topic.

However, dance, or any form of art, is a tradition that is likely to change based on each situation it is placed in. Based on our secondary research, the impacts of the dance form, its institutionalisation and the value it adds to culture, is less studied in an environment outside of Kerala. Outside, the art form has been adapted into dance dramas, theatre productions and contemporary experimentations signifying the globalisation of Kathakali today.

Chapter 3



Review of Literature

The beginning of the revival of the art form of Kathakali is often linked to the establishment of the Kerala Kalamandalam in 1930. The national poet Vallathol Narayana Menon and the local ruler Manakkulam Valiya Kunjunni Raja had many discussions regarding how the art form can be revived. The Raja promised full support to Narayana Menon in establishing an institution that would provide formal training of Kathalaki. Finally, in 1927, Kerala Kalamandalam was registered as a charitable society in Kozhikode (Paul, n.d.). Kunjunni Raja had a *kaliyogam* in his palace, which was given to the Kalamandalam, instructors and students included, on the day of the institution's founding in 1930.



Fig. 3.1 Statue of Vallathol Narayana Menon

Vallathol Narayana Menon believed in retaining the Gurukula system that was followed for many centuries. He did not want to deviate from the traditional Kathakali training methods. He emphasised on the *Guru-Shishya parampara* as the method of functioning at the Kalamandalam. He believed that the proximity between the teacher and the student brought by this system would be the most efficient way to impart dance training considering changing times.

So, initially, the Kalamandalam only offered dance training. However, to keep up with the fast modernising society, a need was felt to veer towards more formal techniques of education as well. Thus, the two were combined. As it stands now, the Kalamandalam is a deemed university that offers undergraduate and graduate programmes. Opinions on this are

varied, as some say that without tradition, the essence of the art form is lost, while others say that with the advancement of time, teaching the art form would not be as effective without adopting modern methods of teaching.

The Kerala Kalamandalam's main aim was to propagate the art form and increase its popularity. The efforts of the founder on this end were not futile. One author implies that this institutionalisation of Kathakali was one of the contributing factors to its categorisation as an art (Amir, 2014). After the Kalamandalam's establishment, more institutions for the instruction of Kathakali were established, furthering the revival of the dance.

One such institution of Kathakali is the PSV Natyasangam, which was established a few years after the Kalamandalam in 1939. It was established by PS Varier, who, until then, had run a Kathakali company. Similar to the Kalamandalam, the Natyasangham was also established in order to increase the popularity of the art form by giving prospective practitioners a place to learn Kathakali. The Unnayi Warrier Smaaraka Kalanilayam is another popular institution in Kerala that teaches Kathakali. The foundation of this school was laid by a culture of regular Kathakali programmes in the Irinjalakuda region of Kerala. These programmes sparked interest in learning the dance form, which led to the formation of the Kalanilayam in the area.

In "Kathakali" by S. Balakrishnan under the series, "Dances of India", the author talks about how the method of practice and instruction of the art form has been diluted through the passage of time. However, people and institutions are making efforts to restore its glory. The Kerala Kalamandalam, the author says, was the first of its kind to do so. The main way the institution is said to have done this is by the formalisation of the art form: right from the organisational structure they have implemented within the institute to their credibility and stature. The author also discusses funding, or the lack thereof. He says that there is a need for proper efforts from public and private sectors such as that of Kalamandalam, the government, etc. to be the significant driving forces. This outlook is something we will study.

After the establishment of these institutions brought interest back to the dance, its practice started spreading outside of Kerala. In 1960, Delhi's first institution for Kathakali was set up in Rajendra Nagar. Its intention was, originally, to allow Malayalis living in Delhi to connect with the dance. The establishment of this new institution also brought new ideas to the

dance. Uma Vishnu at The Indian Express writes, “the Centre, with Sanal Edamaruku as president, is producing several new plays based not only on traditional and mythological stories, but also historical stories, European classics and Shakespeare’s plays” (2010). The increase in institutionalisation of Kathakali has, thus, been instrumental to the development of the art form.

Body Centric Knowledge: Traditions of Performance and Pedagogy in Kathakali focuses on the performances and pedagogy of Kathakali. Dancers start training very early in their childhood, the reason for which is explored by the author. He talks about how the body of a child is easier to hone into the frame that is required for a Kathakali performer, as this is before the body settles into “adult firmness” (Narayan 2016). They also focus on practicing hundreds of times the very complex movements of the face and body, and the sequences which are then encoded into their muscle memory. We can use this paper as a comparative study as to what Kathakali training has been for since its inception to what is now done in the Kerala Kalamandalam.

The paper *From Meditative Learning to Impersonal Pedagogy: Reflections on the Transformation of an Indian Gurukula* explains how, in the ancient system, the relationship between the *gurus* (teachers) and the *shishyas* (disciples) was more intimate and familial rather than existing purely out of a want for remuneration. This was because the *shishya* lived with the guru during the period of instruction. *Training in Indian Classical Dance: A Case Study* by Ananya Chatterjea discusses the effects of this. It gave them more time together, which meant that students would have lessons and practice for multiple hours a day with no disturbances. Over time, the *gurukul* system was discarded, and the method of instruction became “hour-long classes once or twice a week for three or four years” (Chatterjea 1996). The loss of class time implied loss of detail in the teaching of the dance. However, recently, dance schools like the Kerala Kalamandalam have tried to bring the residential system back, albeit without the fostering of as close a relationship between the student and the teacher. The Kalamandalam aimed to let the students dedicate their days to learning and practicing their craft. But socio-political interferences pushed students to demand secondary education, arguing that it would increase their career prospects. This led to the sanctioning of a high school for Kalamandalam students, and the institution being given the status of deemed university. Thus, “modern pedagogical orientations” found their way into the traditional method of instruction. The system at the

Kalamandalam now is a blend between a gurukul system and a regular residential school. We would like to explore the impact of this on the instruction of dance.

The impact of the institutionalisation of Kathakali is not all positive, though. Dr. Haripriya Namboodiri, a Kathakali practitioner, “believes it was the institutionalisation of Kathakali training, with the setting up of Kalamandalam in 1930, that entrenched the notion that Kathakali is a male-only art form” (TK, 2021). The training techniques of the Kalaripayattu, which form the basis of Kathakali teaching today, require the actor to be physically, mentally, and spiritually strong enough to withstand the hours of performance. This was used as the main reason behind keeping women out of Kathakali. Large-scale institutions were not willing to accept women which led to the idea that women were usually incapable of performing the dance form being entrenched in people’s minds.

It was only as recently as 2021 that Kerala Kalamandalam finally opened its doors for women (TK, 2021). Although this could lead to Kathakali practitioners as well as the general public shifting their views on the dance form, the past struggles of women in Kathakali must not be ignored. Additionally, the casteism that has always been present in the history of the art form did not change due to its institutionalisation. Since Kathakali dancers’ lives used to revolve around the lives of their patrons, lower caste dancers were forced to sacrifice their dignity. Patrons, “belittled and even insulted them, deliberately making them wait for hours under a blazing sun, before doling out a token remuneration.” (“Behind the Colour of Kathakali”, 2016). In this context, it is worth noting that the efforts to institutionalise Kathakali at least partly came from a desire to maintain the hegemony of the upper caste Hindus during the Malabar rebellion, which were “revolts against the upper-caste/upper-class landlords and the colonial state by the Muslim Mappilas of Malabar”, in which lower caste Hindus also participated (Amir, 2014). Efforts to popularise Kathakali through the Kalamandalam had the intention of establishing a Hindu unity, which would weaken the unity between the lower caste Hindus and the Mappilas, thereby weakening the rebellion (Amir, 2014). Caste and power dynamics are, thus, inseparable from the history of Kathakali and its institutionalisation.

These social dynamics inform the viewers’ perception of Kathakali, along with several aspects surrounding the performance itself. The many different places that Kathakali is performed in, also has an effect on this judgement, as the location often determines the social

group making up the audience (Glynn, 2001, p. 185). A Kathakali performance in rural areas, temple festivals or urban auditoria, will each attract a different audience. Urban settings tend to attract elitist spectators who focus on the subtlety and ability of the actors. This means the performer and the social and political contexts of the story are more under focus. Meanwhile, audiences in rural or temple settings focus more on the narrative and sentiments of the story being performed.

For them, the aspect of *bhakti* (devotion) becomes more important as they see the gods they worship and the characters from religious epics come to life on stage. Their relationship with Kathakali comes from their lifelong journey of living with the religious epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. For foreign viewers of the performance, who typically have no existing cultural insights, Kathakali becomes an enthralling experience (Glynn, 2001, p. 186). It is also easier for local Malayalam speakers to understand the lyrics as the performance goes on, making it easier for them to follow along with the performance, and letting them focus on the nuances of the performance rather than only trying to understand the story.

Author John Glynn mentions three things that ensure providing more commonality to appreciating the performances. This can be achieved by gaining an in-depth understanding of the narrative detail of the story; learning the morals, ethics, and politics in the storytelling; and lastly acquiring a better understanding of the various performance determinants in a Kathakali performance and how they coexist. According to Glynn, the last learning factor, which is gaining an in-depth understanding of the nuances of performance, is what bridges the gap between elitist viewers and popular spectators (Glynn 2001, p. 187).

The focus of the paper *A Psycho-Educational Model to Enhance the Self-Development and Mental Health of Classical Dancers* is to study the impact of institutionalised classical dance training on the mental health of young dancers. The paper discusses a pilot study conducted on 9 ballet dancers, using it as a basis to develop a model to address and counteract the negative impacts of institutionalised training. The results of the study showed that, among other factors, dancers based their self worth on their achievements and only used external milestones as markers of success. This paper provides a basis for our study of institutionalisation of Kathakali training. While the focus was ballet, it could be translated to the experiences of professional

Kathakali dancers. It would serve as a guide to looking into the psyche of an individual at the Kalamandalam, and how the practice of Kathakali impacts them mentally.

The paper, *Performance on Social Media: Kathakali Artists in the Digital Age*, is a survey of social media usage among Kathakali dancers to understand how social media factors into the practice and tutelage of Kathakali. The survey found that social media usage increased during the pandemic, and it was used more for professional purposes than personal ones. It says that social media highlighted the disparity between the number of male and female performers as well as semi-urban and rural areas. Performers were providing information and tutelage of Kathakali on social media without restrictions to access. This method of teaching and learning is a sharp contrast to the method followed at the Kalamandalam, which is something that could be explored. We aim to discuss the merits and demerits of the two types of tutelage.

3.2 Gaps in Literature

After reviewing the literature, we have found three primary gaps in the research. Firstly, there is a lack of modern day research in Kathakali. Most research is focused upon the origin of the dance form and its teaching in the original gurukul system. Secondly, there is a lack of research into the effects that the residential system of the Kerala Kalamandalam has on the learning of the art form. Finally, there is a lack of research in the area of if and how the institutionalisation of Kathakali has standardised the dance form.

Chapter 4



Research Methodology

The three main research methods we used both pre and on field are netnography, ethnography, and interviews. We did this by interacting with the stakeholders of the art form and Kalamandalam, particularly, management, teachers, students, and alumni. We conducted extensive semi structured as well as unstructured interviews. Semi structured interviews allow us to go beyond the scope of our own interview questions and learn about the subjective realities of the students. While questions were made according to our pre-field secondary research, we made sure to leave room for new or unexpected information. This is why we decided to use semi-structured interviews instead of fully structured interviews. Unstructured interviews gave us the chance to interact with the students and faculty at the Kalamandalam in a more informal setting, which not only helped us form better relationships with them but also provided an understanding of their lives outside of the academic setting. Both methods allowed us to put the interviewees at ease while we learnt more about their life in the institution.

Finally, we studied the overall environment of the Kerala Kalamandalam, for which ethnography was most useful. Since it involves observing the institution as it functions closely, it gave us insight into the education system, specifically the curricula and teaching styles, the attitudes of the student body, student-teacher relationships, and the impact of the boarding school system on the students' lives, amongst other things.

On the field, our dominant method of research was conducting semi-structured interviews which enabled us to acquire qualitative data. After dividing ourselves into groups of 3 or 4, we were able to talk to a greater number of people and conduct more interviews at the old and new Kerala Kalamandalam.

We had certain predetermined questions for the 3 categories of people we were interviewing which included

1. Students and alumni at the Kalamandalam,
2. Professors at the Kalamandalam and
3. The Management at the Kalamandalam.

Before each interview we made sure to ask for consent, after which we proceeded to conduct and record the interaction. Based upon the responses gained from each interviewee, we asked follow-up questions that helped widen our understanding of the procedures followed at the Kalamandalam. This also allowed us to conduct our interviews in the form of a conversation that put the interviewee at ease, hence facilitating our data collection.

During our time at the Kalamandalam, we were able to watch two Kathakali performances: one at an event, and the other at a demonstration arranged specifically for us. The performance at the event gave us insight into the various elements of a Kathakali performance and how they complement each other to form the bigger picture. The demonstration showed us the fine details of the art form such as the facial expressions, eye movements, and hand gestures, as well as practice regimes and exercises. The two together showed us how a performance comes together. We were able to relate this to the interviews we had previously conducted as well, which further gave us a more rounded outlook on the performance of the art form.

We also conducted an ethnography. Although we did not stay at the Kalamandalam, our primary research took place within the institute which led to us spending the majority of our time on field in the Kalamandalam. Hence, we were able to observe the students and the professors interact with their natural surroundings and understand their daily lives. We were able to watch quite a few classes and practice sessions, which gave us insight into the learning environment at the institute, interactions between teachers and students, and students with other students.

Predictably, on-field research came with challenges. Firstly, we had to overcome a language barrier. Most people at the institute were only comfortable speaking in Malayalam. While they understood English, they were not comfortable being interviewed in it. This proved to be a challenge for us since our group consisted of only 3 Malayalam-speakers. However, we dealt with this challenge by asking the interview questions in English and audio-recording the interviewee's responses which we later translated. Secondly, we faced challenges in conducting interviews with the management of the institute. A lot of them were unwilling to give us information about the functioning of the institution. Often, our questions were dodged or passed over. When they answered, their responses were quite calculated. They produced answers that were specifically in favour of the Kerala Kalamandalam and were hesitant to speak against it.

This bias was a major limitation of our research. Apart from this we were able to navigate through other challenges and were able to collect valuable information and insights.

Chapter 5



Findings

Our findings will be presented in three different categories: Pedagogy, Standardisation and Spread. The category of pedagogy itself has been subdivided into two categories, curriculum and teaching style.

5.1 Pedagogy

The curriculum was initially designed by the founder, Vallathol Menon. But as time passed, there was a need to make the syllabus easier. Multiple professors revealed that their curriculum has been stripped down and made easier as the years have gone by. According to one professor, it was *Guru Nath* Unni Menon who brought about changes to the syllabus (see Appendix B. 12.). He is credited for making training less rigorous and bringing a structure to the teaching of Kathakali. The curriculum today has seen many more changes as the Kalamandalam has worked to adapt their teaching methods to the 21st century. Today, the students at the Kalamandalam are not only trained in Kathakali but are also required to learn languages like English, Sanskrit and Malayalam. This has increased the duration of the program from 6 years to 8 years. They did this in order to give the students more options in the job market.



Fig. 5.1 Prof. Arun Warier

This has had an effect on the amount of time students spend training and practicing as they now have to devote a few hours everyday to their language classes.

With respect to the curriculum, we saw that there was an equally big emphasis placed on both theory and physical training. Over the years changes have been made to the syllabus to make the learning process less rigorous. During the first three years at the Kalamandalam, students are made to focus only on the basics of the physical movements and internalising the various Mudras and facial expressions. Once this has been perfected, students begin taking classes on literature and history in order to understand the stories from Indian epics they are performing to the stage. There is a similar process for the students who are learning makeup and costume design. The students learning makeup spend 2 years painting only on clay pots before getting the chance to paint on performers' faces.

The teaching style and student life at Kalamandalam have seen similar changes over the years. In the original system, the *Gurukula Sampradhayam,* students were expected to obey the teacher blindly and never speak up. There was also no emphasis placed on theory in this system. Students were only expected to perform the visuals as told by the teacher. The current system makes it a point to teach the students theory and languages like Sanskrit and Malayalam so that they can understand what they are interpreting for their performance. The system followed at Kalamandalam now is a little more comparable to the traditional schooling system. Students must wake up early in the morning for their daily physical exercise and massages. Then, they have their dance lessons, followed by language lessons. The professors when interviewed explained that while they still believe discipline to be an important quality in a good student, it is not the only requirement. Finally, it was found that the Kalamandalam's approach to teaching has a lot of influence on the teaching of Kathakali across Kerala as well as the rest of the country.

5.2 Standardisation

In our time at the Kalamandalam, one of our aims was to observe and understand which aspects of different performing arts have been standardised in the institution through the years and which ones have not. Broadly speaking, some aspects that have been standardised include mudras, facial expressions and ornaments, while some which have not included the costumes though the extent of standardisation varies for each of them.

To analyse each of them:

1. Costumes - While the costumes are to a certain extent standardised already, in the sense that most characters portrayed by the dance form are identifiable through the costumes the minute the audience sees them. However, the Kalamandalam itself has no role to play in either the design or the making of the same. The costumes are designed based on the material available and there is no real standardisation in the same. The costumes themselves can be separated into different parts, the *chutti* (makeup), the *angavastram* (the cloth worn above the torso with elaborate designs and patterns) and the *mundu* (the skirt which is layered multiple times over to make the actors look larger on stage).

2. Jewellery - In this context, jewellery refers to the elaborate head articles which are used to differentiate one character from another and set them apart. The headgear is called *mukutam* or *kireedam*, which adds to the grandeur of their appearance. For example, characters like kings or deities may have towering crowns, while demons might have horned headgear. The design for this, has not really been standardised. They have been a part of the costume that has been around for generations and have just evolved a little with time. On the whole Jewellery is not an aspect that has been standardised by the Kalamandalam, but had a level of standardisation to begin with.

3. Mudras, Facial Expressions - Mudras and Facial Expressions, which were already quite standardised to begin with, were different when taught by different gurus during the *guru shishya* teaching methods. Kathakali was an art form that was taught and passed down over generations, and as a result variations would occur in how one set of students learnt it from one guru, and another set of students learnt it from another guru. According to a Maddalam professor at the Kalamandalam, “Kathakali’s main growth in general has been powered by Kalamandalam due to the systematic processes in place, making it easier to execute.” (See Appendix B.13.)

4. Makeup - Makeup, in regards to many art forms, is already quite standardised. The face makeup is known as *chutti*. The makeup involves intricate designs using natural colours, primarily made from rice paste or from flowers. The colours and patterns of the *chutti* also help identify the character type, such as green for noble characters, red for evil characters, and black for demons. Having a course on the same, with students dedicating themselves not to performing

the art but to help bring the art to life in terms of designing the ornaments and applying the makeup, definitely contributed to the standardisation of Kathakali. Most students who take up make-up have to practise for three years on earthen pots before they are deemed skilled enough to apply *chutti* on the performers themselves. Increased social media activity in recent years has led to increased scrutiny of the makeup and costume on performers and as a result led to more significance given to the same, as claimed by the professor who teaches ornament making and makeup at the Kalamandalam (see Appendix B.15.).

5. Ornaments - Ornaments are one aspect that has gotten significantly standardised over the years that the Kalamandalam has existed, even having a course on the same. Ornaments are made at the Kalamandalam as well. The most used ornaments in Kathakali include the earrings, bangles/ bracelets, belts and even necklaces. These ornaments add to the visual appeal of the characters on stage and are sometimes distinguishing features too. For example, only the female characters wear earrings and the colour of the bracelets set the characters apart. One professor even said, “the uniformity in the ornaments and the way they’re worn in Koodiyattam is brought in by Kalamandalam. Koodiyattam as an art form originated and developed from different families (Kudumbangal). Kalamandalam has helped uniform the differences that sprouted due to the different sources of origin.” (see Appendix B.15.).



Fig. 5.2 A Kathakali performance

5.3 Spread

As discussed previously, the spread of Kathakali has largely been attributed to the establishment of the Kalamandalam. Before the establishment of the institution, the art form had been on a decline due to lack of funding and patronage. The Kalamandalam was established in

order to bring more attention and funding to the art form, thereby reviving it. The reach and spread that the art form has attained is proof that the Kalamndalam has had success in this endeavour. The institution popularised Kathakali around Kerala, in other parts of India, and around the world. Interactions with people from the Kalamandalam provided further proof of this.

One of the most tangible ways the Kalamandalam contributed to this spread was through their education. A professor at the institution says, “The people who have studied here are the ones who have gone and taught the same in different institutions' ' (see Appendix B. 12.). The establishment of the Kalamandalam led to people having an avenue to learn Kathakali, which was rare before this as there were only a few *Kaliyogams* around the state that taught the art form. After graduating from the Kalamandalam, the students became teachers at other places, thereby enabling more people in other places to learn Kathakali. This happens today as well, as evidenced by the fact that a professor listed several institutions that were founded by the Kalamandalam’s alumni (see Appendix B.14.).



Fig. 5.3 Spread of Kathakali through the internet

The passage of time allowed the art form to spread to other parts of India as well. The International Centre of Kathakali was established in Delhi in 1960, thirty years after the establishment of the Kalamandalam. A lot of the prominent professors at this institution were Kalamandalam alumni who went on to become legends in the field.

Interest in the art form has now spread across the world, the Kalamandalam itself, is proof of this. People from all over the world come to the Kalamandalam to watch various dance performances and to tour the school. Over 5 days there, we talked to two groups of people who had come to the Kalamandalam from other countries. They expressed their fascination with the art form, and a desire to learn more about it.

This worldwide interest in Kathakali is also evident in the fact that some students see opportunities to further their studies abroad. A PhD student expressed interest in going to Europe after his time at the Kalamandalam. He said that he wanted to go into research, and that going abroad would be a good avenue for that, due to the fact that "they give more value to art forms" and consider "Kerala art forms [...] very important" (see Appendix B.5.). While we could not find data that could prove this, the fact that he has heard this through word of mouth alone is a testament to the fact that there is some truth to this claim. It must be investigated further.

Another aspect that points to the globalisation and spread of Kathakali is fusion and modernisation within the art form itself. Kathakali has moved from only adapting stories from Hindu mythology to experimentation with other stories as well. Shakespeare's play *King Lear* was adapted for Kathakali in 1989, which is one of the most famous instances of this globalisation (Phukan, 2018). One professor said, "New expressions, be it from Shakunthala, Shakespeare, Othello, [or] from other Greek plays [are ones] we have started experimenting [with]. Even Christian stories, such as stories of Christ, have also been incorporated into Kathakali. Even other poems have been tried." (see Appendix B.14.). The adaptation of these texts is a form of connection between art forms from different parts of the world. Experimentation in this is a testament to the spread of Kathakali to other cultures and languages.

From the three findings of our study, we will now examine how we interpreted the same.

Chapter 6



Analysis

6.1 Pedagogy

The pedagogy of the Kalamandalam has gone through an evolution. From advocating for strict discipline and student-teacher relationships to integrating theory, language and flexibility, the institution has come a long way to set a standard of education. The transition from the *guru shishya* system has seen changes in the way the dance form is taught to students today.



Fig. 6.1 Mridangam Kalari (classroom)

There seems to be a more improved and comprehensive framework as to how the theory and practice of Kathakali is structured. Students start by learning the basics and they must spend years perfecting them before moving onto theory and more advanced lessons. The timeline of their study has been established, which has become a standard for other institutions. The average timings of daily theoretical and practical training have been also adjusted to make the routine less rigorous compared to how it was and student friendly than how it was, and professors at the Kalamandalam have said that equal importance has to now be given to both theory and practice of the dance form.

An alumnus turned senior professor at the Kalamandalam talked about how learning Kathakali is a process that must strike a balance between both theoretical and practical aspects of the art form. According to him, before the structuring of the art form that can be seen today, this balance was not met satisfactorily. Back when he was a student, familiarising himself with the

theory or literature was primarily driven by self study (see Appendix B. 16.). While it was important in order to better understand the stories, characters, and significance of their performances, the lack of importance given to theory at the Kalamandalam meant that a lot of students did not know it. Now that it has been incorporated into the curriculum, students are able to carry out more informed and contextualised performances. They have better knowledge about the characters they portray, which improves their expressions and body language.

The increase of emphasis on theory has come into the curriculum due to the change of the diploma programme into the official Bachelor of Fine Arts degree programme, which came with provisions for academic work along with practice. The introduction of this degree programme has changed a lot of things for the students at the Kalamandalam. Firstly, the increased emphasis in teaching of theory has opened up a new area of interest and potential employment for students. While, conventionally, teaching was one of the only available career paths for performers of Kathakali (and most other art forms), now, students who are interested in the theoretical aspects of dance have been inspired to pursue research and academia in Kathakali. The Kalamandalam has a PhD programme for these students, and provides academic opportunities after this as well (see Appendix B.8.).

Another big advantage of the change from a diploma programme to a degree programme is the degree itself. A big reason why this degree programme was introduced was that the recognition of a diploma was not enough in practicality, with people saying that “without education, we can’t go further” (see Appendix B.12.). Socially and professionally, an official degree affords more recognition to the holder than a diploma does. This is extremely useful when it comes to employment in places outside the Kalamandalam, such as in schools or other such institutions.

Changes in teaching have inevitably been accompanied by changes in learning styles as well. When it comes to discipline, students are not forced to blindly exert themselves anymore and train past their comfort zones. The nature of learning has recognised the needs of students in the 21st century. With these changes, the pedagogy of Kathakali in the Kalamandalam has evolved to include the demands of current times and fit the needs of teachers and students alike. This change points to an active effort to keep up with the times on the part of the Kalamandalam. Although the rigour of the art form has not reduced, the mental strain on the students has, or, at

least, there has been an effort to reduce this. Professors are divided on their opinions on this change, but most agree that the old strictness was effective. Thus, change is not free of friction and pushback. While the alumni are of the opinion that the old method is more effective in precision, there has been no concrete proof of the same.

It is undeniable that the Kalamandalam's pedagogy has changed a lot since its establishment. These changes have come about for a multitude of reasons, including increase of efficiency, introduction of new topics, and ease in the outside world.

6.2 Standardisation

Kalamandalam was started for Kathakali. Being one of the earliest institutions to teach Kathakali, the Kalamandalam's teaching style has impacted the dance form at various levels. The people who have studied here are the ones who have gone all over the country to teach in various institutions. This has helped the spread and led to the standardisation of the art form. The establishment of the institute helped preserve the essence of dance forms like Mohiniattam and Kathakali. As mentioned by a professor, "Without this establishment these styles would have deviated from the original and lost its meaning." (see Appendix B.16.).

The institutionalisation of Kathakali resulted in a systematic approach, as a curriculum with a structured syllabus was formed. Kalamandalam has given more focus to the theory of the art form. This systematic method is particularly significant for a complex art form like Kathakali, demanding mastery in storytelling, acting, music, and physical movement. The professors place importance on theory as well, saying "We have to study the epics, puranas and literature and understand how to perform." (see Appendix B.11.). This approach is currently being used in a variety of different institutions. Majority of the professors and even external teachers are Kalamandalam graduates, leading to Kalamandalam becoming the point of origin for the teaching style. There are not many differences in teaching methods now because all the teachers have attended the same courses at Kalamandalam. Every instructor teaches in their own unique style, yet it all falls under the same umbrella. Furthermore, since the Kalamandalam provides a college degree, which has more weightage when it comes to getting jobs than just a diploma course, there has been an increased interest in learning the dance form.

This revival of the art form in a structured way has encouraged a newfound appreciation for it that exceeds linguistic and cultural barriers. Professors mentioned that they have been to countries such as the United States, Paris, France, Germany, Singapore, and Belgium to perform. Furthermore, the Head of Department for Kathakali, spoke about how Kalamandalam's decision to follow a residential system has led to an increase in foreign exchange students. Here, foreign students come to Kalamandalam for around 2 months and learn certain aspects of the art form. This has made the art form more accessible and widespread.

The standardisation of the art form, at the Kalamandalam allowed for a specific focus onto the theoretical aspect of the art form which included character studies or a deeper understanding into the stories being performed. This is different from how the art form was taught before the Kalamandalam as, back then all the time spent learning the art form was all performing and practicing the art. As one professor said, "Without the aches and pains that come as a result of the hard work put in, there is no real progress." (see Appendix B.16.) Furthermore, it does not allow for a personalised method of teaching since it has been converted into a college system.

However, it is also vital to adapt to changing times and infuse new principles into the teaching of this traditional art form; additionally, the curriculum assures a consistent learning experience with a regular timetable and holds even the gurus accountable. The Kalamandalam emphasises the need of building a strong foundation through perfecting the basics. Once a strong foundation is established, students have the potential to be more creative with their choreographies and interpretations of the characters in the future since they understand the art form in its truest essence.

6.3 Spread

Before the establishment of the Kalamandalam, Kathakali was considered a dying art form. Its founder, Vallathol Narayana Menon is credited with reviving interest in the art form. He established the school in Kerala, and his students went to other parts of the country and founded their own schools. After this, Kathakali became one of India's major cultural exports. Because of these circumstances behind the spread of Kathakali within India, all of the teachers of the art form are trained within a more or less centralised system. The core of the system is the

Kalamandalam. Students who graduate from the Kalamandalam either go on to teach there or return to their hometown and start their own private practices outside of the institution. Professors who are trained at the institution, thus, carry forward the same pedagogy and teaching practices to their own lessons. It shows that regardless of how far the dance form spreads, its core remains the same.

This applies to paradigm shifts within Kathakali as well. Teachers and dancers across India and the world follow the mould set by the Kalamandalam. For example, when asked about the recent decision to include women in the institution, a professor said it has "affected all art teaching areas." (see Appendix B.11.). Decisions taken by the Kalamandalam filter into teaching institutions around the world. Students from the first batch with female students will learn in an environment that puts men and women on equal footing in the context of Kathakali for the first time. That batch will carry this mindset outside the institution after graduating to their own performing troupes, institutions or coaching classes. This batch will produce the first set of female teachers of Kathakali trained by the Kalamandalam. This change would not be possible without the Kalamandalam taking the first step. It is worth investigating this new change in the dance form and the ripple effect this will have on the Kathakali community on the national scale.

One of the biggest evidence of the spread of the art form would be how the dancers started using foreign texts as source material, thus further expanding it from just classical Indian epics and traditional Malayalam stories. We were told that dancers now performed stories from the Bible and works by Shakespeare, in and out of India, which had led to the dance spreading on an international level. This expansion on the source material has not been met with pushback by the professors at the Kalamandalam. According to one Kathakali professor, "New expressions be it from Shakunthala, Shakespeare, Othello, from other Greek plays we have started experimenting. Even Christian stories such as stories of Christ have also been incorporated into Kathakali. Even other poems have been tried. These aren't any bad things, just some new reforms that we can bring to the art form" (see Appendix B.14.). While this allows international dancers the chance to bring variety to the dance form, it will not completely overhaul the foundation of Kathakali that the Kalamndalam has laid for centuries. Students' interpretation of these new texts will still be entirely based upon the training that they received either directly from the Kalamandalam or from a teacher who learnt from the institute. Foreign students who learn at the

Kalamandalam and spread the dance form outside the country. These students who have been fortunate enough to learn at the Kalamandalam then go on to replicate its teachings in their home countries. This once again ties the spread of Kathakali back to the standards set by the Kalamandalam.

The Kalamandalam's reach, however, is more than skin deep. It also operates at an individual level. A lot of the older professors who had learnt their art form at the Kalamandalam had inculcated the name "Kalamandalam" into their own names, out of admiration and respect for the place. This seemingly small detail actually reveals how much of the teaching, and by consequence, the spread of Kathakali is influenced by the institute.

One of the most illustrious examples of the Kalamandalam's international reach is Milena Salvini, a French dancer and artist, who in 1962, came to the Kalamandalam on a 2-year scholarship to learn Kathakali (Kaladharan, 2006) was awarded the Padma Shri, the 4th highest civilian award of India, in 2019, for her services to Kathakali and its spread. Isa Jacobi, who studies theatre in Germany, has been involved in Kathakali since the 80s. She has learnt Kathakali under Mr. Kalamandalam Balasubramanian in Margi, Thiruvananthapuram, with a scholarship from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (Kerala Tourism).

Chapter 7



Conclusion

Our research mostly consisted of semi-structured interviews and ethnography. For the interviews, we had a set of predetermined questions, based upon which we asked follow-up questions that catered to each interviewee's response. This allowed us to collect qualitative data from 3 groups of interviewees: Students, Professors, and the Management at the Kalamandalam.

Alongside the interviews, we also engaged in active observation of the dance form. We attended a Kathakali performance in Karmana Hall, Cherppulassery. This helped us observe the make-up, costumes, hand gestures and facial expressions of the artists. The performance also provided us with a first hand perspective of the social and cultural impact of the dance form through conversations with the audience members. Finally, we had the opportunity to view a demonstration of the art form where we were told about the nuances of the physical techniques and historical context of Kathakali. These two performances added great value to our study for we were able to draw parallels between them and the interviews that we conducted ourselves. Hence, we were able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the art form and its institutionalisation at the Kerala Kalamandalam.

The Kerala Kalamandalam, established by Vallathol Narayana Menon, pioneered the formal education of Kathakali the way it is seen in India and the world today. The changes they have made can be widely classified into three categories- pedagogy, spread, and standardisation. However, each of these categories is interdependent, and enhancements in one led to enhancements in others.

Before the institution was established, Kathakali was an oral tradition passed down from teachers to students, and then passed down to those students' students when they started teaching. These teachers taught out of independent *kali yogams* based on their individual learning experiences. Thus, changes in the performance style was common across performers of the art form. When the Kerala Kalamandalam was established, it absorbed a large number of these *kali yogams*, taking both its teachers and its students. This resulted in the need for a written syllabus for the sake of cohesion and organised learning. The teachers at the Kalamandalam produced this syllabus, detailing the rights and wrongs of performance in a way that can be referred back to later. *Mudras*, leg movements, facial expressions, eye movements, hand

movements, etc. were documented and preserved, so all teachers at the institution could teach the same thing. Also, the curriculum contained an order in which the basics were to be taught, how much emphasis was to be placed on a particular topic (such as a step or an exercise), and a method that the teacher could follow for teaching.

Common themes that we observed with respect to the pedagogy were details on the changes the curriculum has gone through. It has become less rigorous and physically demanding. Alongside the art form itself, students now also learn theory and literature, English, Sanskrit, and Malayalam. Today, practical and theory classes are being given equal importance. These changes collectively led to the duration of the program being increased from 6 to 8 years. However, one aspect that has remained constant is the level of discipline that the professors demand and require from their students. Professors wholeheartedly believe that discipline is a large factor that influences one's success in the field of this art form.

It would be factually incorrect to say that the establishment of this syllabus meant that all change within the Kathakali teaching practices of the Kalamandalam was eradicated. The syllabi and curricula of the Kalamandalam have continued changing in order to meet the changing demands of the changing social circumstances. For example, theory, which was not emphasised originally, is now being given almost equal importance to practical performance. The students spend half of their academic days on learning theory, which is a practice that only started after the institution started offering a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

These changes observed led us to the question of standardisation. To analyse this, we looked at the standardisation of various aspects within the dance. We found that costumes, jewellery, and makeup were not standardised by the Kalamandalam specifically, and the institute does not influence their design. However, the evolution of the dance form as a whole has come with the standardisation of these aspects throughout. Although face expressions and eye movements have been standardised already, there are certain variations observed based upon the teachings of different *gurus.* In terms of ornaments, the Kalamandalam has contributed quite significantly to its standardisation. The institute standardised the various different styles of ornaments.

With the Kalamandalam having such a great impact on these aspects of the dance, it can be concluded that the institute has contributed largely to the revival and spread of the dance form too. The establishment of the Kalamandalam provided an avenue for interested students to learn the dance form, and go on to make a career out of it. In fact, multiple students who graduated from the Kalamandalam either teach there today or have started their own teaching institutes. Over time, this dance form has also gained global recognition. The Kalamandalam receives an international audience who have expressed interest in the dance. Multiple students themselves aim to engage with research abroad after graduating from the institute. This global scale has introduced modern aspects to the dance, with the works of Shakespeare and stories from the Bible being used as source material. This intersection of cultures, traditions and languages is a testament to how an art form can transcend national boundaries.

The establishment and development of a fixed curriculum led to standardisation of the art form within the institution. No longer was each teacher's dance style different from the other. Different styles were not eradicated entirely, but there are not as many variations within the same style anymore. There came to be a distinct right and wrong within things like the holding of *mudras*, postures, etc. Differences in teaching styles were also minimised, as the curriculum established a timeline for learning that was meant to be followed. Just as the curriculum changed, the standardised methods followed at the Kalamandalam changed as well. However, the differences over time are not as vast as the differences were before the establishment of the institution. The Kerala Kalamandalam made the dance form uniform and cohesive.

Over a few decades, Kathakali went from being a dying art form to one that was recognised around the world. This was credited to the Kalamandalam. As time passed, the students who were educated at the Kerala Kalamandalam went on to establish their own institutions in other parts of Kerala, India, and, eventually, the world. These newly established institutions brought in more students of Kathakali in their respective areas. This process resulted in the spread of Kathakali. The reason the Kalamandalam was so important to this process is the fact that it put time and money into bringing attention to the art form by teaching it formally.

These three aspects of the evolution of Kathakali, pedagogy, standardisation and spread are closely interrelated. The establishment of an institution of Kathakali brought a need for a formal curriculum. The making of this curriculum standardised a lot of aspects of the art form

due to the need for the entire institution to teach it in the same way to avoid confusion. This brought organisation into the art form. The students who graduated from the Kalamandalam went on to establish their own institutions. Being that they were taught in accordance with the Kalamandalam's curriculum, that is what they went on to teach as well. This further standardised the art form in other regions as well. The establishment of their own institutions by alumni of the Kalamandalam spread Kathakali outside of just the confines of the area it is located in, which is how Kathakali obtained the reach it has today.

Chapter 8



Limitations and Scope for Further Study

The two biggest limitations of our study were the language barrier and the fact that we were confined only to the Kalamandalam for our research.

Lastly, since we only had three Malayalam speakers in the group, the number of people we could interview reduced as everyone was not always able to conduct interviews. While we still did talk to a lot of people and gain a lot of insight, more time or more proficiency with the language might have improved our research.

As we did not go to any other Kathakali institutions, we were not able to compare the syllabus, teaching, administration, etc. of the Kalamandalam to those of other institutions. This made us unable to measure the true extent of the impact the institution has had on the art form. Another area where further research can be done is the lives of alumni after the Kalamandalam, especially those who go on to establish their own dance schools or institutions. A perspective on the differences and similarities between them and the Kalamandalam would provide insight into the teaching of Kathakali in general, and how it has evolved over time.

Secondly, our research was solely qualitative. We only talked to people and got their opinions on the institution and its impact on, and relationship with, the art form. We chose not to acquire quantitative data. One major avenue for further research on the Kalamandalam and its relationship with Kathakali would be a focus on the economics of the institution. This could involve a quantitative analysis of the institution's income and expenditure, which has been hinted at through the report but could not be studied thoroughly.

The management of the institution was fairly unwilling to disclose this type of information. In general, they were tight-lipped about the internal workings of the institution and the management. The responses that we did gather from the management lacked nuance and were completely in favour of the institution, regardless of their actual feelings. Although they were reassured that they would remain anonymous, they were hesitant to express any negative feelings about their experiences at the institution for fear of repercussions. Thus, we were not able to thoroughly research some of the negative aspects that were hinted at in our time there, such as sexism within Kathakali, or the caste politics surrounding the art form. Finally, another

important area of study would be on the gender and caste dynamics of Kathakali, both inside and outside the Kalamandalam. Information on those topics would provide a more rounded perspective on Kathakali and the culture surrounding it, and would serve to make marginalised voices in the arts heard.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Questions for Professors

1. How long have you been teaching at the Kalamandalam? Were you a student over here?
2. Has your family been teaching or are you a first generation teacher?
3. Why did you choose to teach at KK? Differentiate between your experience learning vs teaching here)
4. What is an average class like with you? Timing, schedule?
5. Do you feel kathakali as an art form has seen a noticeable change since when you were learning and do you feel Kalamandalam has an effect on that?
6. Is the syllabus framed by teachers, or the management team alone or do the two consult with each other? How much do you focus on theory vs training?
7. How standardised has the teaching of kathakali become here? Are the stories standardised through institutionalisation?
8. How do you incorporate technology into your classes?
9. How do you personalise your classes and what is your teaching philosophy? How do you keep it up to date with the 21st century?
10. If you could select one aspect a Kathakali student requires to excel in the dance form what would you say it would be? Why?
11. What are the changes you have seen in the method of teaching if there are any?
12. When the Kalamandalam was established, who were the people that came? In the sense rich / poor, only brahmins, men, etc?
13. The literature that came together as educational resources, where did that come from?

Questions for Students

Questions about Kathakali

1. What inspired you to pursue kathakali?
2. At what age did you start learning kathakali?

3. What's your perspective on the costumes and the makeup and are there any specific exercises you do to help make the training effective?

Questions about the Kalamandalam

1. How many years have you been at the Kalamandalam?
2. What are your aspirations and goals for the future?
3. Why did you take admission to Kerala Kalamandalam? Did you train anywhere else before?
4. What were your expectations from the teaching at Kerala Kalamandalam?
5. What are the challenges faced by you?
6. Opinions about the living situation? How's the student life here? Do you enjoy staying on campus?
7. What is the overall culture like - competitive or encouraging, peer relations, teacher student relations, community?
8. What is your schedule? / How do you spend the rest of your day?
9. How many hours do you have academic courses in a day/week?
10. How many hours do you practise usually (By yourself / Formal practice)?
11. Would you prefer more academic study? Do academics get in the way of learning the dance?
12. Were your family members supportive of your career trajectory? How is your relationship with them now?
13. What are your plans after graduation?
14. How has social media affected and technology impacting/helping with your training and performance?

Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

Attached below are the transcriptions done by us; translated through our knowledge of Malayalam. of all the interviews we conducted of the students and teachers; our major stakeholders. This comprises the primary research of our exploration.

1. **Interviewee: AM**
- **Designation: Chenda student**

Q: Please give us an introduction about yourself.

A: I am 18 years old, I have been studying here for the last 6 years.

Q: What are you studying here?

A: I'm studying the Chenda here.

Q: What inspired you to pursue the art form and why here?

A: Initially during my childhood there used to be a tiny urge to want to learn this instrument, as I grew older, the want to study it grew and so I decided to pursue it. I believe that the best place to study any art form is here and so I decided to come here and learn to play the Chenda.

Q: What plans in the future after studies are completed?

A: Plans basically entail one of two things, either becoming a teacher here or going outside and internationally performing.

Q: What's the student life like?

A: Mornings are usually reserved for practice and detailed rehearsals of the art that we are pursuing and from 2-5 we have college classes for a few subjects.

Q: How many hours of practice do you do daily?

A: Including class and personal practice I do about 8 hours in a day.

Q: What do you do in your free time after classes are over?

A: Either I go for practice or we all play football and cricket together.

Q: Do you use social media?

A: Yes, I use social media both for entertainment but also for learning. Certain things to perfect I watch youtube to learn more on and better myself.

Q: Are there changes that you are observing or are there things that you want to change about this institute?

A: I have noticed a few changes, (on being asked to elaborate) The professors who used to teach us earlier were a lot stricter. But things like that keep happening and small changes are inevitable.

Q: Is the teaching more practical intensive or theory intensive?

A: I feel like it's more practical than theory intensive in the Chenda art form but that depends on both the area and the teachers. In my case, there is 65% practical while the rest is on the theory of the instrument and how exactly to go about learning and playing it.

2. **Interviewee: AT**
- **Designation: Mridangam student**

Q: Could you please introduce yourself?

A: I am a Mridangam student, in my third year of college here. Mridangam is a useful component in many art forms being taught here, like Ottan Thullal, Kuchhipudi, Mohiniyatam and can be used as an accompaniment in Carnatic Sangeetam as well. It is also used in different programmes in and around here, but mainly as an accompaniment.

Q: Where are you from?

A: I'm from Palakkad, and have been here for the past 8 years. I started studying here in 2016, when I was in 8^{th} grade.

Q: Why have you chosen to study here?

A: I didn't particularly choose it myself. I didn't know much about colleges or institutes, but my father was the one who suggested Kalamandalam. I was interested in playing and learning the Tabla instrument, but on reaching here I found out that there is no tabla here, and so I started pursuing the Mridangam.

Q: What do you want to do in the future? Career wise?

A: Career basically translates to one of two choices, either becoming a teacher at the institutes or join a big or more famous performers troop, and accompany them on their performances and travels.

Q: Are there any changes you want to bring to the teaching methods of the professors at the Kalamandalam?

A: Earlier, the teachers used to be really strict. Only now have they started giving us little freedom in the things we do. But because of the excessive practice, I love learning here. Most art forms only get better with practice and since we do that in abundance, it's good.

Q: Do you have friends in other institutes?

A: Some students I know, who used to learn at the Kalamandalam, are now learning at the RVL college in Ernakulam. While some in Hyderabad.

Q: Are the colleges better from what you have heard?

A: I feel that one has to experience learning from all the different institutes, either your PG or masters programmes, to be able to make a solid judgement and decide which is better, so I'm not too sure about which is better or worse.

Q: Was your family supportive of your decision to pursue this field?

A: Yes, absolutely. My father is my biggest and strongest supporter. No one else in my family has come to the Kalamandalam to study the mridangam, my sister has learnt Bharatanatyam and my father sings the local folk songs.

Q: How has the current curriculum or syllabus and theory helped in your studies?

A: In the years from 8th to 10th grade, the studies and practical dance courses are a little hard to manage and balance. While normal schools teach around 10 subjects, we have to learn 13. It was a little risky, but we managed. However, even now I feel like they teach a few subjects without any meaning or usefulness in the real world. But we don't have a choice but to learn the same. For example, the literature aspect. While we need to learn it, I believe that it has no relation or significance to the art we perform and so see no need to see it. These things need to change in my opinion, but with me just thinking this will only not cause this change.

Q: In your syllabus, do you focus more on the practical or the theory?

A: I feel the focus is mainly on the practical but the theory is just understood.

Q: After the Kalamandalam being established, has there been a lot more focus on certain art forms? Is there a genuine benefit or no?

A: There are quite a few benefits to studying here, as long as people come here with the mindset and mentality to study the art form, it's one of the best places to learn.

Q: Do the kids here and those at other universities show a definite gap in skill?

A: Skill depends on the skills of the teachers teaching them in my opinion.

Q: Could you describe the fixed schedule here?

A: For a year in between, the university classes were supposed to be in the morning, and the dance classes in the afternoon, as a trial system, but then because that was too taxing on the students so the system was brought back to the old one as is now.

3. **Interviewee: HN**
- **Designation: 2nd year student of Maddalam**

Q: What was your reason to join Kalamandalam?

A: I mainly came to the institute for Chenda. In Kalamandalam, getting into the Chenda course is very difficult because there is a lot of competition for such aspects. I had cleared the entrance exam and went for the interview round as well, however, I didn't get into the Chenda course and had to alternatively explore Maddalam.

Q: When did you come to Kalamandalam?

A: It has been 8 years since I joined in the 8th grade.

Q: What was your schooling before 8th grade?

A: I studied in a typical school till 9th standard. Later, I took admission into the Kalamandalam and repeated my 8th standard as it is compulsory to start studies in Kalamandalam from 8th grade itself.

Q: So if you were already in a typical school, what made you want to pursue the Chenda?

A: Playing the Chenda has always run in the family and I have seen it being played in functions. (took a crash course maybe, learnt somewhere for a while which inspired me)

Q: How is student life?

A: Between 4 and 6 in the morning there is sadhagam. After that we go for breakfast where we students talk to each other. We have porridge and banana for breakfast. When we come back, at around 9am, we take bath. After that, from 9 to 12 we go for Kalari. With Kalari, we also perform Cholliyattam, which is basically a kathakali performance where all the students get together and perform. Then in the afternoon, we go to the mess for lunch. From 2-5 pm, we go to our college where we learn Malayalam, Sanskrit and literature and also theories related to kathakali; Natyashastra. After college is done I go to play football. Because we are degree students, we can do whatever we want, however, before college, the students enrolled have limited freedom.

Q: What you are studying in college, how is it helping your practical training?

A: Kalamandalam has a lot more resources and I learn here the most.

Q: Do you have friends in other institutes?

A: Yes.

Q: What are they studying there and how is it different?

A: They used to learn in Kalamandalam, and then went to other places for further education. This is because the main 'Kala' and the basis is actually taught at Kalamandalam.

Q: Do you only have one teacher?

A: Every class typically has one teacher only.

Q: Do the academics; courses you take between 2-5 get in the way of your practical training?

A: If you want to focus on academics primarily, one doesn't come to Kalamandalam. From 8th to 10th, focus on academics is of great weightage but practical training is always prioritized.

Q: How is the environment here? Is it competitive or supportive?

A: There's a lot of companionship amongst us students, supporting each other as much as possible. In our hostel rooms, we sit on our beds, play our instruments together, give feedback to one another and understand each other well. That is also because all day long we are together so we have that bond.

4. Interviewees: GG, DPV
Designations: Mohiniyattam students

Q: What age did you start learning?

A: We started studying at 8th standard.

Q: Did you study outside before coming to Kalamandalam?

A1: I studied in Kollam

A2: I studied in Vadakanchery with a teacher

Q: What inspired you to pursue Mohiniyattam?

A1: From a young age I have always been crazy about dance and then I knew a little bit about the Kalamandalam so I joined here.

A2: In the Kalamandalam one of the main subjects is Mohiniyattam so liking that I joined here

Q: Are you studying only Mohiniyattam here or?

A: We also study Bharathnatyam and Kuchipudi as a sub

Q: Why Kerala Kalamandalam?

A1: In Kerala this institute is one of the best for classical art forms….

A2: The way they teach here is not there in any other institution, the sadhagam and everything else.

Q: What is special about this place?

A: The teaching style is special and then from 7 o'clock we have exercise, and for every year we have various teachers who we get to specialize with. We also have theory and other aspects such as Kannu Sadhagam and Abhinayam. We have special classes for these.

Q: Is there a balance between the theory and practical?

A: Yes, both are taught similarly.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

A1: We want to perform,

A2: After doing our MA, we'll take a PHD and then become a teacher here as well.

A1: And then we will probably have some scope outside as well.

Q: What scope is this that you will have?

A: Teaching and Performing

Q: Did you also have an admission process and have to write a test?

A: Yes we had an entrance test and interview

Q: with such a strict admission process did you have any expectations from the institution and have they been met?

A: We had already heard about how things work at the Kalamandalam, so we had an idea about the institution beforehand itself.

Q: What about the challenges you faced?

A1: When we first joined at 8th standard we faced problems such as waking up early, which we got used to eventually

A2: Also the food, we only got veg and no non-veg. Mornings it's only kanji.

Q: What about going out and eating?

A: No we aren't allowed to go out like that when we are in 8th till 12th. We have no phones either. These problems were there in the start which we slowly got used to.

Q: So since you don't have your phones talking to your parents must be difficult

A1: Yes it was difficult we are allowed to contact them twice a week.

A2: The warden will have the phones from which we have to call them.

A1: but once we finish 12th and come to degree we have our own phones. There were also time limitations such as being able to talk only for 5 minutes on the phone

Q: So it is a bit strict isn't it?

A: Yes it is, however it is getting a little more lenient as with the newer generations.

Q: Since it is a competitive field, how are the student relations?

A: We don't really think about the competition, we are all just here to learn and we focus only on that.

Q: How do you manage both academics and dance?

A1: Initially it was a bit difficult, we had come from English medium, but now over here its a Malayalam medium school as it follows the Kerala board. So it was a challenge because of that

A2: The syllabus for us over here is less.. Compared to outside

A1: This is because we are learning dance as well.

Q: Does the use of Social media help you?

A: Yes it helps sometimes for seminars..

Q: What about watching videos on YouTube and learning?

A: No, not really. Usually it's only for the seminars that we watch YouTube and learn.

Q: Are there any changes you would like to bring about in the institution?

A: There were a lot of issues before, such as not being able to use the phone but now they are allowing phones, even the food they are allowing for non veg to be served. All of this since the chancellor changed to Mallika Sarabhai, also now there is more freedom to girls in the institution.

5. Interviewee - AK
Designation - PhD student of Kathakali

Q. Can you introduce yourself?

A. I am a Kathakali student in this institution, and I started my journey from age 12. Now, I [have been] for 10 years in this field… Like my high school, higher secondary, BA, and MA have also been in Kathakali.

We will take one subject… Each student takes Kathakali, Koodiyattam, like Kerala art forms, percussion like Chenda, Edakya, each student selected a method. From eighth standard we can start written exam and interview, and then we select.

Q. How long have you been at the Kalamandalam?

A. 10 years. I started my journey in 8th standard. The important thing is we can study in the Gurukula Sampradaya like the traditional system in this institution face to face a teacher and student in a classroom only 3 or 4 students in a classroom. That is important. Because every year in a particular subject there are few seats. Like in dance 8 seats only. In my field, 4 or 6 seats only in Kerala or in other states so a student is talented so that person will be selected. and We can study PG and PhD also here in this institution.

Q. How was your audition process?

A. Early in my life journey, i also studied bharatanatyam and kuchipudi. In my childhood, I saw kathakali and was really impressed by that, so, I came to the Kalamandalam.

Q. Did you learn from anywhere else before you came to the Kalamandalam?

A. No no. When I came here, I studied it.

Q. Do you perform outside?

A. Yeah. We can perform when we finish our tenth standard SSLC, we can perform. our teachers also take programmes, and we can perform there.

Q. What inspired you to start Kathakali?

A. in my childhood, i was seeing it in temples, temples are also related to these art forms like Kathakali and Koodiyattam, so we can see and i was so impressed.

Q. Before you took admission in the Kalamandalam, did you have any expectations about what it would be like here?

A. No. I am doing a PhD here in Kathakali and I teach other students.

Q. What are the challenges you face?

A. Only two universities have these courses. Like, [for] these art forms in Kerala this is the only one. For Kathakali, there is another one, MG University, but the job opportunities are very rare. When students pass out, me also, the job opportunities are very less. That's a problem.

Q. Speaking of which, what are your plans after you finish your time here?

A. I am doing a PhD in Kathakali. I want to go outside, like Europe. I will improve my English and study. Because, on that side, they give more value to art forms like basically Kerala art forms, the'yre very important. Other states[' art forms] like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh… they're very important. After I finish my post graduation and explore my life, I will study to teach Kathakali.

Q. How is the campus life here?

A. The campus life is very simple. Like this atmosphere is important. like the Koothambalam is based on the natya shastra… We can perform here. There are so many opportunities we get in our study time. That is important. After that, when we want a job, that's when we face problems. That is critical. There are very few opportunities here [for that].

Q. How is the student life here?

A. Student life is like… every student has a good life. We start classes early morning at 4:30, and a student practices continuously for 8 hours a week.

Q. Is this practice on your own or in class?

A. We practise continually after our teachers take classes because this is not theory, it cannot be written. We can [only] practice practice practice and make the actions more perfect. [If we] practice, we can become good artists.

Q. How is the assessment system here? There are both theory and practical exams right?

A. Mine is only theory. Practical also I know but my focus is theory. I write articles based on Kathakali, and Malayalam in my main focus because my written English is not good. I want to improve it.

Q. What is your schedule like in a day?

A. 4:30-6:30 classes in the morning, and then we will eat food at 7:30. We go to more class at 9 am.

6. Interviewees – 2 students

Designation: one for the "mizhavu" and one for Carnatic music.

Q: How long have you been studying here?

A1: both of us have studied here for 5 years

Q: Before coming to the Kalamandalam did you study anywhere else?

A1: no. I didn't

A2: Yes I have studied before. The reason I took admission here was quite unexpected.

A1: I have studied Chenda before. I came here to study Chenda, but I couldn't. That's why I ended up learning the instrument called Mizhavu.

Q: You mentioned that you studied Chenda before. What is the difference between teaching styles that you experienced at the place you learned before vs the Kalamandalam.

A1: yes there are differences.

A2: Yes there are differences in the Carnatic music segment. Particularly, the *sadhagam* that we do. The fact that we do *sadhagam* here, allows us a lot more practice which is something that I experienced only after coming here.

Q: So in your opinion is studying outside better or studying at the Kalamandalam better?

A1: looking at the art forms, studying at the Kalamandalam is better because there is specific focus on each form. The fact that we had *sadhagam* from 4 to 6 and classes from 9 to 12 give us the required practice for perfecting the art.

Q: So in your opinion, is creating the institute, solely for the purpose of art a good thing or bad?

A1: No, it's good. Previously it used to be *gurukulasampradayam* and we still adopt certain teachings and mannerisms from there.

Q: how do you balance the academics and art form being taught here?

A2: Usually, for students studying from 8^{th} to 12^{th}, the syllabus that we learn has a lot of portions cut out compared to the ones students study at normal schools. So we cover multiple subjects and can manage practicing the art as well.

Q: What is the plan in the future after this?

A2: When joining here, I had no idea what I wanted to do. But after 10^{th} and our Arangetams (first performance) were over, It was more fixed that this is what we will do for the rest of our lives.

A1: The mizhavu isn’t really an instrument that a lot of people know about, its basically a copper drum. Its used as an accompaniment for koodiyattam. But since not a lot of people know about it, it leads to a lack of opportunities for us. Essentially there’s no future.

Q: Are you both from the same batch?

A2: No, we graduated from 12th in different years.

Q: Being women are there specific challenges that you faced at the institute?

A2: yeah there are but the differences they teach boys and girls including different timings and a lot more restrictions being imposed on us, like not being able to leave the hostel unless parents call and inform, even if you are in the last year of college.

Q: Since you were a student here, what changes do you see in the teaching style here?

A2: Yes there are quite a few changes, the teachers are a lot less stricter with the students, and the interactions between both seniors and juniors and also students and teachers have increased. Lot more connections are forming now as opposed to when we were studying.

Q: Does the Kalamandalam help you in finding performances outside?

A1: There are a lot of student troop programmes that happen outside, in which people outside give responsibility to the Kalamandalam which we get to be a part of.

A2: Carnatic music doesn’t really get many performance opportunities, as it's not really a Kerala specific art, it's more a South Indian music, so not much scope for performances and programmes.

7. Interviewees and designation – 3 students of Mohiniattam

Q. How long have you guys been studying at the Kalamandalam?

A. 6 years. We started in the 8th grade after which we had the option to pursue our art further through a B.A. degree. To enroll into the B.A. program, there was an entrance exam which we had to clear.

Q. Before 8th grade, did you study anywhere else?

A. Yes, for a year, we had studied at an external institute. Along with Mohiniattam, we are also learning Bharatnattyam and Kucchipudi. We are only learning dance, no instruments. One girl is from Thiruvananthapuram, one from Palakkad, and one from Mallipuram.

Q.Why Kalamandalam?

A. In Kerala, the most accessible and reputed institute is the Kalamandalam. I believe it is the trustworthy, because it is managed by the government and I really like the teaching style of Mohiniattam here. Also, there is a nice positive ambience to the place here.

Q. Future plans?

A. Either be a teacher or become a stage performer of Mohini. I want to go to tribal areas where children who do want to learn the art form and have the talent and dedication, so that I can provide them with the resources needed to expand and encourage the dance form there.

Q. Challenges faced?

A. Development here is difficult. There exists an orthodox way of thinking here which has a lot of resistance to change. Since we are a new generation, to accept this, it is difficult for us. The teachers and management here are still stuck in that time in a sense, arising from a different generation. The Gurukul system in a sense is still strictly followed here. For example, girls are still supposed to wear a shawl and move around and if they are not seen with the same, they're looked upon. Even though there is a co-ed system, however, teachers tend to look down upon friendships between opposite genders.

Q. How is the syllabus and are there any changes required for the same?

A. Till the 10th grade, just like schools outside, we have a similar syllabus however a concise version of the same. This is because we only get 2 hours of academic studies while our other time goes in practical training. Chapters are smaller but subjects are almost the same ones. When we come to +1 and +2, we are only allowed to take arts. When we come to the degree course, I feel like the syllabus is flawed. This is because every semester, we have just one subject. For example, currently in our fourth semester, we are learning IT and this has been there only for this semester and we wouldn't be taught this otherwise. We are only provided with the basic teaching, for example in English, we struggle with the spoken English part because that isn't focused upon. It is a Malayalam medium school. We are also being taught Sanskrit but that is at a complex level. If they

bring in certain changes in the syllabus, it will be beneficial for us in the long run. Language for us is really important because we are performers who when going out, need language to interact and converse with the world outside and make our point.

8. Interviewees and their designations: 2 Ottan Thullal students

Q. What inspired you to start dancing?

A1: We both came to this field at the age of 5-6. I'm studying here from 8th standard onwards, since childhood I have loved dancing and all. I'm studying OttanThullal here at Kalamandalam. I found out about this dance form when I came to Kalamandalam. The artist, art form and the language in it in this field inspired me as the art form mainly leads the communication with the audience.

A2: It's the same for me. I studied outside until 12th grade and then came here to pursue a degree at Kalamandalam. I had applied to the Kalamandalam in the 8th standard but didn't get in due to the interview and the audition process. This is my 4th year in the Kalamandalam, I'm currently in my second year of MA. I studied Ottanthullal from 5th standard till 7th grade for school Kalolsavam. I studied in CBSE till 10th grade and participated in school Kalolsavam performing Ottanthullal. We get to perform for 10 minutes at the school competitions where we have to focus on one story. If we are a performer, we need to perform the story for 1-2 hours, that's why we study a story in entirety. We cut the portions and include things important to the story.

A1: It is mainly a storytelling art form, only one narrator will be there. It's not like kathakali, no more actors, characters etc. All the characters are enacted by one actor, that's the speciality of this art form.

A2: I learnt Ottanthullal for the school Kalolutsav but I have been studying dance from 3rd standard onwards. I came here for Ottanthullal as for school Kalolutsav, I just studied 10-20 min, one or two stories only. At that time she paid to study at the Kalamandalam and wanted to know more about the art form, hence I came here and I'm finishing my degree here too.

Q. So you said that you were studying Ottamthullal somewhere else earlier, what is the difference between that style of teaching and teaching here at the Kalamandalam?

A2: Mainly there are 4 types of Ottanthullal: South, North, Unjasmarigam and Kalamandalam. I'm studying normally as an artist. I didn't study the basics of Ottanthullal, when performing for Kalolutsav.

A1: Here at Kalamandalam, you learn the basics of everything. That's the main difference between the Kalamandalam and outside as over here you study the base for everything, for the form, for the music, mudras etc. And also we include a lot of dancing movements in Ottanthullal. Outside, there are no dancing movements as only the storytelling is given importance but here

we include dance movements from art forms like kathakali, same mudras but the using style is different.

Q. Before you came to the Kalamandalam, I'm sure since it's a very famous institute, you must have had some expectations about it. What were your expectations and have they been met? What is the reality and is it any different?

A1: I've been here for more than 11 years and I came here in 8th standard. I face homesickness. Here, the reality of hostel life is the problem that I faced the most. Kalari and school is okay but hostel life is a challenge that we were faced with beyond our expectations. The early morning practices used to be a challenge back in 8th standards, but we have gotten used to it now. Back then,we weren't allowed to use mobile phones so it was difficult to contact our parents back home and our phone time was restricted to 5 minutes per week. The 5 AM practices and the Kalari are very different from the outside world.

A2: I didn't face this challenge of homesickness and no phones since I came here degree onwards. We finish up our college, go back to the hostel, rehearse and practice after that and then study for the next day, then we take a bath and sleep. We have the same routine the next day, waking up at 5AM everyday. Only change in schedule on the weekends.

Q. What is your routine like on Saturday's and Sunday's?

A1: Saturday's and Sunday's we go outside to take classes and teach our students.

A2: She faced a lot of problems while doing 2+2 but nowadays students don't face that much risk since they are allowed to carry android switch phones. But the warden collects it. Things changed with time. But expectations and reality are the same for me.

A1: (In 8th grade) I thought about dropping out almost everyday. The schedule and the rigorous practice is not something we expected while coming here. Every morning we wake up and practice. Having no contact with the parents made it very difficult for us. But, now we are okay with it.

Q. You obviously spend a lot of time on campus and with your peers, how is the student life here?

A1: Very different, when we ask our outside world, they say that this is a completely different world. Outside we have theory exams and written exams, over here the emphasis is higher on practical exams.

A2: There is barely any contact with the students outside, as from 8th to +2 we aren't allowed to go outside; we only stay in the hostel. If you want food or anything else, it can only be given to you when your parents come. But nowadays, the Kalamandalam has changed so that if students want something, the security picks up the snacks and all and gives it to them. Also, if we want to call our parents, we have a permission slip. We need to inform our parents and the warden before we are allowed to go outside. If we want to go outside for the temple, eating or anything normal, we need to ask our parents and only then we are allowed to go outside.

Q. Is it the same for MA students?

A: No. Graduation students, so the parents are not called that much, so we have a slip to go outside. We have the freedom to go and come back whenever we want to go, but we need signatures from the HoD, Kalari teacher, main warden, hostel warden, and academic coordinator. If we get the signatures of these five people, only then are we allowed to go.

Q. How do you manage the stress that comes with the practice and the hectic lifestyle here?

A1. If we want to study here, we have to manage all of this. Some students can't take it. Some people come to the Kalamandalam because their parents push them to, but they don't stay. They end up dropping out.

A2. Managing this is not a Kalamandalam rule or anything, but if you want to study here, you will. If not, you go. That's what the wardens and teachers have all said: "If you want, stay. If you don't, go".

Q. Was your family supportive of your decision to study here?

A. Yes, both of our families are so supportive of this career, which is our greatest blessing.

Q. Were you both the first to go into dance in your family, or have your families been into dance or theatre?

A1: In my family, my grandmother was not a professional, but she used to perform in her school for annual days. Otherwise, I am the first person in my family who took this field as a profession.

A2: I am also the same. My parents' support is the main [motivator/help]. First, in third or fourth standard, I started studying dance. I went to an institute for 1-1.5 hours. My mother is a teacher. She took me there on her only free days, Saturdays and Sundays, to study for those 1.5 hours.

A1: we always have programmes in the night-

A2: -and our parents stay with us. I think if we get married and our partner says “don't go to programmes in the night time” or “don't travel long distances for programmes”, that won't work. Our performances have no time, it can be in the night or the day. So, if we get married also, our partners have to be as supportive as our parents. That's our aim.

A1: This is a big problem faced only by women, which men don't face. Men can go out any time, women aren't like that.

A2: Programmes don't happen always, it has a season. During programme season, we have to travel a lot. Those times, our parents come with us in spite of their jobs. Our parents will only support us in everything.

Q. What are your career plans after the Kalamandalam?

A2: That's our main question.

A1: We are teaching students right now. We teach students for Kalolsavams and all that. We can also teach here, but being a teacher has problems.

A2: So many people graduate and go outside [to teach]. 50-60 people come here to interview [for teaching positions] but there are only 7-8 posts.

A1: Even 8th standard onwards has only 4-6 seats. The students are also facing the same problem. 10-15 students are let in.

A2: Everyone at the Kalamandalam is facing the same problem, that is, “What do we do after the Kalamandalam?”

A1. The only option is teaching students and making money through that. Or we can do research here.

A2. There is a net, a UGC net also here. If we succeed at that, it is possible, I guess, to come here to teach. We want to achieve that.

Q. How is the student culture here? Is there a lot of competition?

A2. It is similar to other colleges outside, I think, if a person is in colleges outside that have hostels.

A1: Here, there is a system called the *gurukalasampradhayam*. We have to stay here and study like in the past.

A2: As for the culture, I think the Kalamandalam and outside colleges which have hostels are the same. If an individual wants to become good, they become good. If they become bad, here also, they become bad. Our individual characters and culture are also like that. There is no different culture or anything.

A1. Our culture is *kalari*, college, practice, etc. It's normal.

Q. You mentioned *gurukulasampradhayam*. Do you think that staying here and being involved in the Kalamandalam culture has helped you be better at what you do?

A1&2: Yes, of course, definitely.

A1: I am a person who doesn't- I'm very shy in society. When I come here, I change. I am now a better person for it.

A2: In the Kalamandalam, we stay in the hostel. We face all the problems here, and if we graduate and go outside, if there is any problem, we will face it.

S A. Now, I can face all the problems.

Q. Since you mentioned you studied outside the Kalamandalam also, do you feel that one is more effective than the other? Which one has helped you learn the most?

A1: Kalamandalam

A2: We mentioned that the base knowledge we only studied in the Kalamandalam. That's why performing outside and inside are different. That's the main thing.

A1: If we want to become an artist, the best option is the Kalamandalam.

A2: Dance or Thullal, any art form, if we study in the Kalamandalam that is the best. It is the best option. Of course, other places are there. They are good teachers in good institutes. But the best option is the Kalamandalam. But if you don't want to pursue art, then don't come to the Kalamandalam. I think there's no use. If you want to become a teacher or lecturer, doctor, engineer, or something like that, [there is no use]. In 8th to 12th here, the syllabus is also different from outside so there is no use for being here. both of us want to succeed at this art form and have it as a profession, so we have to problems. But there are students who studied here

from 8th to tenth, for three years, but they left, and it wasn't useful. They wasted 3 years. It's not useful for outside studying. I think there are different values. The Kalamandalam certificate is AHSLC, outside is SSLC, the certificate is also different. When they do their tenth here and go outside, what base do they have? In the Kalamandalam also they don't use it, and outside also they gain nothing.

A1. Kalamandalam is best for us.

9. Interviewee - Male Kathakali dancer

Q: So these characters that you play, how exactly do you prepare for the different emotions and actions that you will have to portray?

A: After joining here in 8th grade, we have multiple conditioning sessions for a few years to tune our bodies into the one needed to practice the craft. We have sadhagam from 4:30am in the mornings and then we have *ullichal,* which is basically a massage for our body, to get it conditioned as we need it. We have things like *adavus* and *chuzhupus*, all of which condition our bodies to be able to handle the art form. After that we head to the kallari classes, which is where we learn the syllabus and things about kathakali, and then we have *thodayam, purrapadu, pagathi purappadu*, all of which are essential to learning the art form.
After learning these art forms, which are essentially different characters and costumes within Kathakali, we move on to the *padams* or stories.

As we progress year on year, we increase the difficulty, length and intensity of the stories and poems learnt.

On august 15th, during our 10th grade is when our *Arangetams* usually are.
Kathakali usually associates to a few colours, green, yellow, red and black, all of which are made using natural ingredients (*maniyola* – usually a rock) for makeup for the performers to apply on their faces.

(talks about *arangetam* processes, like giving gurus the Dakshina, lying down for the make up and applications of additional colours on the face and other parts of the body)

The costume donning is quite an elaborate process, to achieve the wide spread of the costume and also have it stay like that throughout the performance, there are different aspects that have to be considered. One thing is that sacks are dipped in rice flour water and wrung out and tied around our bodies to give a sturdier look. Then there's ornaments and other coloured fabrics which we need to wear.

Then comes the head ornaments, they aren't placed directly on our heads, we usually tie a cloth on which the heavy head ornaments rest.

These are the physical or outward aspects to it, for the mental aspects, that comes only after watching multiple kathakali performances. I usually watch the performances put up by our teachers, which basically gives us an understanding into how exactly to become the character. Only on watching do you come to know the different characters that you can play, and also how to do it. Once we watch it, our teachers tell us the back story and finer details about it like how to do certain actions or how to wear the costume and so on. The we have discussions with our classmates or college seniors, doing all this allows us to understand the character. Forming this character sketch through this process is a very important step. Then we watch the performances and learn through seeing, another very important process, then we perform. Initially during the first few times you are portraying a character it is very nerve racking, and a lot of tension. But our professors are a huge support and encouragement, they always say "just go do it, it only gets

better and easier the more you do it." The first few times doing it always leads to tiny mistakes, but that gets lesser over time and practice. Even with performing, you work your way up from performing minor characters, to slowly doing the major ones.

Q: During your initial days of training, what were some of the challenges and difficulties you faced?

A: Back at home when we are going to a normal schools, we only need to wake up around 7:30/8, but here the morning *sadhagams* took a lot of time to get used to. The first major hurdle to face after getting here is staying away from your parents. After so many years of growing up with them and being around them, not seeing them for so long is a very difficult thing. Then slowly, when you start making friends and interacting with one another, and getting help from our seniors who usually tell us that this is the schedule we need to follow and so on, things get easier. To get to the sadhagam sessions initially, we only wear a towel while going, and once we are there we do the whole Dakshina process for our gurus. Initially while joining, it was a difficult experience, considering that it was everything we were not used to. After a few days of such training, our body starts to protest as it really isn't used to all that we are putting it through. Even *ullichal*, which is a body massage that we do everyday during the rainy season has its own hardships. Its usually done with the feet, we lie down in different forms and shapes and our body is massaged by feet, with varying paces and pressure, all of which causes different aches and pains in the body. Most other arts students get the weekend off, but we kathakali students don't. Using all this oil on our bodies might also cause infections if not cleaned properly and thoroughly.

Q: Performing with the same rigour and intensity all the way from morning to afternoon must take a toll on you and the performers right?

A: Usually after all the Sadhagam that we do in the morning, hunger is the next biggest problem. Morning the effort we put in is quite rigorous and taxing, and we are quite tired after it. After eating lunch we go for the kallari, after each day if we go to the room, we end up just lying on our bed, unable to get up. After this we have school from 2-5pm which we are often too drowsy during, just nodding our heads in acknowledgement to the teachers but not really paying attention. Our bodies are essentially good for nothing, it'll just be pain (gesturing to his entire body and neck and midriff). But at the end of the day, this is what we came here for, so no matter how tired we do end up being, we still learn and want to learn more.

Q: When you are practicing for the events, you guys practice with uniform, but on stage you have make up, heave costumes and so on, is it difficult? What is it like?

A: Yes, it is very different not just in terms of costume but also in terms of the performance itself. In the kallaris, we are just practicing but on stage we are the character, which is nothing like how it is in the practices. Initially, when we enter the stage, its quite difficult but as we practice more and get used to the feeling of the costume being on us, it gets easier. When we are onstage and wearing a costume, it's a very different feeling, its like getting inside something, very constricted, getting used to it takes time and repetition.

Q: So while performing, what is the reaction time like? Is it just engrained because of the amount of practice or are you thinking about what to do next?

A: It depends on the character that we play, some of them require on the spot reactions and following of the instruments, but others have enough time for us to think about what to do and then react. To learn this, its essential that we watch the kathakali performances that our teachers conduct and perform.

Q: For you personally, what were the difficulties the first time you got into a costume and performed?

A: the first time I performed, was for my *Arangetam*, which was quite nerve-racking, it made me feel a lot of tension and a lot of fear. What would happen? Would everything be ok? This is the first time I'm wearing this get up, would it fall? Will the *kiridam* fall? Lot of doubts keep circling the mind. Would I have enough stamina to complete my performance? During this, lot of seniors and teachers will come and tell me to not think so much about what might happen, just to get into character and imagine that I am the character. The would tell me, "All the people who are here to watch, are here to see you play that character and be that character, so you need to transform into it. Do exactly as you've practiced so many times before, and it will all play out brilliantly." Sometimes while performing, one might forget the steps, the things that are tied to the head are tied on so tight that you'll get headaches and so on. Lot of the usual movements that we have practiced earlier on are restricted because of the kiridams and so we need to keep our heads balanced and tight. After the first performance all I remember feeling is relief that it was over and that it went well. After that we get the urge to want to dress up as different characters and do more performances, but still that nervousness is always a small part of it.

Q: Could you tell us about the mental struggles one faces while being in costume for hours in a row?

A: Usually once you've committed to a performance, even if you fall sick before it you don't feel like not performing, because at the end of the day it is one of the few opportunities that one gets. Additionally, a huge problem is the fact that once you're in costume there's no going to the washrooms. Small small problems that one overcomes slowly over time and over completing more performances.

A: Initially when performing, for the Chenda and maddalam students, they get boils or swelling on their palms, similarly for us our feet crack, we injure ourselves, the nails break and so on. The skin breaks, we bleed, and lot of other problems come up then. Sometimes when we are in the Kallaris, and the skin breaks it sometimes happens that rocks or so just get into the feet. We have nothing to do but to continue practice and then treat it once we are done and back in our rooms.

10. Interviewees and designation - 3 Chenda students

Q – Please introduce yourself.

A – Im Akash K Sajin, I'm a 3rd year BA student. I have been here for the last eight years and am from Wayanad.

Q – What exactly are you learning here?

A – Im learning the Chenda for Kathakali.

A2 – Im nandu, also BA 3rd year, studying Chenda at the Kalamandalam for the last 8 years.

Q – Can you tell me a little about the instrument?

A2 – In kathakali, this is one of the main instruments, other than this there is kathakali sangeetham which is the vocals, and maddalam as accompaniments. In fact, I believe that the Chenda is what gives kathakali life.

A3 – I'm Vidhu, second year student, I'm from Alappuzha.

Q – Before joining the Kalamandalam, what were your expectations from the institute?

A – We had good opinions about the Kalamandalam, because we had the slight knowledge that the Kalamandalam was established for the revival of the performing arts. And so if we were to decide that playing the Chenda is what we want to do for a living then learning and graduating from the Kalamandalam gives us a name for ourselves. And so it was sort of like we had to get in here to learn more.

Q – How many students are there learning the Chenda? How are the relations between one another?

A – There are around 57 to 60 students learning this instrument from 8th grade all the way till end of the BA course, I would say that all of us are quite friendly and have good interactions with one another.

Q – What are your daily schedules like?

A2 – we have 'sadhagam' at 4:30 all the way to 6:30 in the morning, after this from 9 to 12:30 we have practice at the Kalaris, which is where we have Chenda practice, and then from 2 to around 5 we have our college or university classes. College classes mainly involve art or language related subjects like Sanskrit, Malayalam and so on.

A – Until 12th grade we mainly follow the state syllabus itself, with a few reductions and changes.

Q – Do you want more hours of academic study? Or is this much fine?

A – For me, I feel like we are not taught enough English, which I feel is a little bit of a shortcoming. But other than that, since we have made a choice to make a living from the particular art that we have chosen to study, this level of practice for the art is good.

Q – What are your plans after graduating?

A – The plan is usually to get a masters in the art form that we are studying. An art form usually requires constant studying or constant practicing to get better or do well.

Q – So do you go for performances?

A – Yes we do, sometimes during ‘purams’ (festivals), or through the Kalamandalam, we get to accompany artists and perform together.

Q – Do you have friends at other institutes for performing arts? How is the Kalamandalam different from those institutions?

A – Yes we have friends at other institutions, but the difference is the amount of practice we are put through on a daily basis, those at other places don’t have the morning sadhagam, which I feel is very important to studying an art form or an instrument.

Q – that’s all we have, thank you.

11. Interviewee: Senior teacher at Kalamandalam

Q. How long have you been teaching Kathakali and why did you choose to come here?

A. I have been at Kalamandalam for 20 years. I joined as a teacher. I studied for 8 years at Kalamandalam. I did diploma and post diploma after receiving a 2 years scholarship from the Government. I started learning Kathakali two years before joining the Kalamandalam.

Q. So before coming to Kalamandalam, you studied Kathakali somewhere else?

A. Yes, I had learnt the basics and also completed my Arangetram before joining the Kalamandalam.

Q. Did you notice any difference in the way you learnt it before coming to Kalamandalam and after coming to Kalamandalam?

A. The Kerala Kalamandalam is a very important institution, famous across India for the study of performing arts. I studied under the alumni from Kalamandalam, my seniors. We call them "ashan" not sir "ashan", means the teacher. We follow the Gurukula system, especially for teaching Kathakali, Koodiyattam. For Kathakali we generally practice at the Gurukul sampradaya, but now it is a degree system. Aesthetically and fundamentally, the parts of the section are not different, they are the same.

Q. Do you think that the systematic method the Kalamandalam uses can limit creativity or do you think it helps the students? Is it limiting anyway?

A. No, no limitations. I can say about me, I have no limitations, I felt that as a human being you have to – normally, I don't want to, I want to make (perform) powerfully.

Q. So the systematic nature of teaching is a better method of teaching?

A. We need that. We always want a system so we can manage an art form like Kathakali. After that, they have their freedom. They can make creations of their own. Fundamental studies are fundamental, you have to follow them, otherwise, you won't be good.

Q. So, can you tell us what your teaching philosophy is? What do you believe is the most important thing that a kathakali teacher must have?

A. I'm really satisfied as a Kathakali teacher and I really enjoy it as a performer because I did so much work for that in my childhood. You have to (train for) a long period for that, and I joined in 2004 as a teacher and I enjoy this job. And as a performer, I'm performing so many characters too, that is very important.

Q. So you believe that as a teacher, you should not just be teaching, you should be performing too?

A. Yeah, that is very important, especially for an artist but sometimes it happens that you are only teaching and not too much performance.

Q. From the time that you studied in the Kalamandalam, you did a diploma course and now you are teaching people who are doing a degree course. What is the difference in the syllabus and teaching style?

A. That is a very good question, you know. When doing a diploma course, there was no school start, just 8, 9, 10 only, no plus 1 plus 2 or degree. So, I'm the first batch student at the Kerala Kalamandalam, when it started school. My registered number is 9. Only a few students at that time. AHSLC, Art HIgh school leaving certificate. And at that time they were mainly teaching the art form, so we could study more and we were more involved. Before that, there was no school, only art. Mornings started at 4:30, from 8:30 to 1 'o' clock and 3-5 and there was class in the evening as well. Only kala. But now, changes such as +1+2 came in and then slowly "degree" came in. In 2007, Kalamandalam was deemed to be a university. Its syllabus was reduced as well since we had to give other academic sections as well. This resulted in less syllabus for art so the students could manage. The student is not burdened by just art when studying, school section, gave birth to afternoon school and college section. So, the quality is the same, quantity is less but quality we maintain. Character studying and other things, for kathakali, when school wasn't there, all the time we did kathakali. We could study many characters and other things.

Q. With the introduction of this academic component, is there something in the Kathakali syllabus you wish you could include but you can't include?

A. Yes. Normally, nowadays the special teaching attitude towards students. We want to give the students some special type of education. We need to maintain our approach. When we studied, at that time, we can't manage this time for students so we have to think and apply some special training techniques, and also come up with and stay with the modern times, to offer the best education for the students. We have to think about the educational system, we have to follow that.

Q. Can you give an example of this, like you mentioned "poodiyar-idigar" what is one example that has like changed?

A. The students come in front of me. Earlier, there was too much "shikshan". I have also studied like that. Now we smoothly deal with classes, that is the special education system, and want to follow that. Normally, it is very difficult to become a Kathakali actor, and there are many problems. But nowadays, it's smooth and we also have to follow. The systems have changed and we have to understand and manage that.

Q. Do you think this change that you said is less harsh, do you think this change is bad or good in some way?

A. I think, in one way i can say bad because like i said quantity, quality and depth these are things very important to an actor. So did quantity, quality and depth but they want the other academic session, they can manage. Theory has increased and practical has become lesser. But the new generations know how to manage that, that is the difference.

Q. So, do you think that the increased focus on theory has affected the performance quality?

A. Yes. They act, at the same time they want to know the literature and the "taalam". Within seconds, they have to convey. That way I say an actor can first focus on the body and not on the brain. Body gives to the mind the art. It is a repetition coming and our body (movements?) naturally comes to the mind. We have to study the epics, puranas and literature and understand how to perform but after (a person becomes) an artist they can do anything, (after fundamentals) he can concentrate on anything. If I think what i can do, I can do anything. I train it (my body), and then I can concentrate on my character. Otherwise, nobody can do that. Body to mind setting is the method.

Q. In Kalamandalam, there is certain literature and puranas and the books that you mentioned, they teach that. So do you believe that kathakali should diversify and adapt other texts?

A. Attakatha is the literature part of Kathakali. Attakatha is the play stories, the great poet Kottarakkara Tampuran. He is very important. He wrote the first stories, Kottayam stories Bhagwatam, Mirvadham, Kalyanasundaram and Kalaghemadham. And also, Hiremandhambikathakalam, Darsheaagam, Kijagavadham, Uttraswayambara, Vetambikathakal, Tampreaagi Naayevadey Madhayegram. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th days. These are Attakathas.

Q. Do you think Kalamandalam should adapt things outside of these kathas?

A. Kalamandalam is the main (body) coordinating art in Kerala. This is the mother.

Q. If Kalamandalam were to create a Kathakali performance that is not from one of these Puranas, would it have influence across Kathakali?

A. Yes.

Q. So do you think Kalamandalam should adapt maybe some other stories?

A. Sure, so many stories are adapted from the bible, from the other muslim texts, all things.

Q. So you have seen Kalamandalam doing this?

A. Yes it was performed.

Q. So by Kalamandalam doing that, it has had an influence on Kathakali as a whole?

A. Yes, you know Vallathol Narayana Menon is the founder. He has also written many christian stories and (adapted) abroad stories such as Shakespeare - Macbeth, King Lear, so many stories, we have performed here.

Q. So when students learn do they learn other stories or do they only learn the epics?

A. No no, students have to follow fundamental things first. These fundamental stories are all content of Kathakali. In Kottayam kathakali, and slowly students coming too can manage any story in kathakali. This takes time.

Q. These stories are written in Sanskrit?

A. Sanskrit and Malayalam, Mishkat and Manipravalam.

Q. So that's why Kalamandalam teaches Sanskrit as well?

A. Yeah.

Q. So you mentioned that you were the first batch of students here, so who were the professors at that time. What was their background? Like you have studied from the Kalamandalam and you are a professor here, so at that time, where did the professor study from?

A. From Kalamandalam. Normally, they are all guru's. When I was a student, my gurus also studied from here and they have become gurus. Normally they change in situation (position) , professor, principal, like that.

Q. How has the teaching style changed over the years? From your guru's to now when you teach?

A. That's what I said. It was harder at that time. Nowadays we have become softer in dealing with students as new generation and new type of education system, we have to have a special approach towards the students.

Q. Sir, Kathakali has historically been a male dominated art form so it is convention that men are the only ones on stage, now we are seeing that women also want to participate in the art form. So now we are seeing that women also want to be a part of this dance form. So is the Kalamandalam accepting women, is it planning on accepting more girls into their Kathakali program?

A. Girl students started taking admission into kathakali 2-3 years earlier. Normally kathakali, we feel that there is a male domination but that is a story style, you know? In epics like Mahabharata, but powerful characters like Panchali, Damyanti are also dominating.

Q. But they are all played by men, right?

A. That is a special thing, mainly in kathakali, the lady character is also played by men. So many women are coming into (Kathakali) but they are not, too much time they don't survive, i don't know it is — you have to continue these things. Male actors can only survive so many years. Many ladies are also coming into Kathakali but you know, so many problems going on in their house after, I think, safety.

Q. We were talking to this professor once, in some other dance form, the training for men and women is a bit different so do you think if there was a change in the curriculum to cater towards women a little more, would women be more interested in this field?

A. Yes, that is the interesting thing. That's why we started admission in Kerala Kalamandalam for ladies also.

Q. So there is a change in the way…

A. Yeah, there is a big change. That's why women weren't granted admission in the kathakali field at the Kalamandalam for many years. That's a different approach, it's affected all art teaching areas.

Q. Because Kalamandalam has opened its doors, do you think Kathakali as a whole will become more receptive towards women?

A. Yes.

Q. Many students become professor and they teach at Kalamandalam and this cycle goes. So does Kalamandalam also accept external teachers?

A. Sometimes. There is no chance that every student will make it as a teacher here.

Q. So is there a difference in the way that external professors teach? As opposed to the ones that were trained at Kalamandalam?

A. Yes so external teachers also come here for their higher studies and they teach here. Not permanently, but they're just coming and visiting.

Q. So do they teach certain aspect of the dance form differently than teachers who learn here and grew up here?

A. No, they are all under the same system. If I see another performer, he will know the same things as me

Q. But sir, is that necessarily a good thing?Don't you think some aspects should be personalised?

A. Every teacher teaches their own way but that way is under one umbrella. The system. Even the external teachers learn the same system. They study the same things even if they don't study here.

Q. So what makes Kalamandalam so special? If it's falling under the same umbrella?

A. The fundamental things are taught very clearly here and other institutions follow it.

Q. So this level of influenc eof kalamdandalam has on the teachings tyle and the art form as a whole, do you think that has led to a lack of diversity in the way kathakali is performed? So do you think that is good or bad?

A. Kathakali is very popular now. And ladies also study it. It is a very special art form.

Q. Do you think there is a chance for another type of kathakali to become popular?

A. Yeah that's possible . It is their individual choice. Kathakali will always be there. They can make their own special characters and stories. There is no problem.

Q. What part of kathakali is there space for women?

A. They want to study performance. They also want jobs. That is the problem, To survive, Kalamandalam cant give jobs to everyone. Especially women who want to become performers.

Q. Are women also specialising in the Chenda or other instruments?

A. Yeah the options is there, So many options are given.

Q. Regarding the costumes and the makeup, have you seen any changes in those aspects in performances not done by the Kalamandalam?

A. Yes it happens because they cant manage perfection. Its too costly. One crown is heavy. Five kilos. We have minimum 64 ties covering our body. Now if you want a crown, it takes about one lakh or one and half lakh and it takes time to make that. They manage with what they have.

Q. Do you still consider that authentic kathakali?

A. Yes yes . Kathakali is studies and they don't have money so they manage. Kalamandalam does not support them.(he means financial support)

Q. Is there anything that can be done to have more job security or opportunities in terms of kathakali performers?

A. We spoke to the chief minister and I wrote to him and asked him to make a its an opportunity for artists. And also in school it has become, one period, two period it is taught at schools. That is their job opportunities. I wrote that several times.

12. Interviewee - AW

- **Designation - PHD student, teacher and alumni**

Q - Can you introduce yourself?

A - My name is Arun Warrier, I studied and now work at the Kalamandalam, in 1997 I joined here to study Kathakali, at the Vallathol Nagar campus, after I completed graduation, I got 2 years of the central government scholarship, which I finished here itself only after that is when the Kalamndalam started offering the post graduation courses which is taught in this campus (Old). Right now I am pursuing a PHD, and in 2020 I joined here as a permanent staff.

Q - What inspired you to learn Kathakali?

A - Usually pertaining to art forms the atmosphere in Kerala is one that prompts people to see it and then want to learn it. For music it's through listening, as this is a part of seeing. Over here, usually during festivals, there are a lot of kathakali performances even today that happen. In today's world as we say for tension relief the way we watch films, back then it was an interest to watch art forms. We used to leave at night with our parents to watch Kathakali performances in the nearby temples. In my younger days I studied more classical music, but then after watching this I was fascinated by the theatrical form and decided to pursue it when I was 13, that is 8th standard.

Q - So from when you were learning as a child to now do you think Kathakali has changed?

A - Sure, according to the times it keeps changing, initially it followed the "*Gurukul Sampradhayam"* which we don't know how it functioned, then when it was institutionalised, a lot of changes occurred to the *Guru shishya* relation itself. That tradition stopped there. For any object including nature, as time goes on changes will occur even in art forms, even in us.

Q - So if a student were to study at the Kalamandalam, versus a student that studied outside will their performances be different?

A - Yes, that is a good question, the primary reason for that is the training here, which is the same training of the past that has been followed till recent times.
When the Kalamandalam was established in 1930, classes used to start at 3 in the morning, which were the practice sessions.. It used to go on till around 8 or 9 according to the *Guru's* preference. It was based on Guru *Nadhan's* wishes, when he wanted to start the classes he would start and when he wanted to end he would end. This was followed only for a few years after the Kalamandalam was established. Once it was decided that a syllabus was necessary a change was brought to this method. Up until then the training method was constant, because at that time they

were not studying anything else except the art form. Now there are schools and colleges which are incorporated into the Kalamndalam. In the past from morning to evening all that was thought about was the art form that was taught, this was also seen in our actions, only in the night would we rest which is when we were sleeping. So learning from an environment with that level of constant training, and comparing it to learning the artfrom from an external environment where a very limited and constrained time is spent on the art form are two very different things.
There are a lot of differences. I believe that these differences can be evidently seen in the performances on stage. The audience will evaluate this precisely.

Q - When you formed the syllabus, what makes you make certain decisions?

A - There are a lot of aspects to talk about when answering this questions, but to give you a concise answer. Keeping in mind the outside educational system, from before itself keeping in continuity with the structure, for example when learning a language, we start with the letters, then the words, and then the sentences and build on it. Then we essentially beautify it and add on to it, thats how the external education system works. This was not how it was for art forms at that time, whatever was told by the *Guru* just do! There was no such thing as asking a question, we did not have the freedom to do so. As time went on, when this place was established, we thought about the importance of creating a syllabus, so using with that as a base, taking music as an example, we learnt to sing the *saptaswarams*, just like how in singing we use the throat in dance the medium is the whole body. So particularly in Kathakali the ordinary human body has to be moulded/transformed. So each body has to be picked out and trained so for that we designed a syllabus. Then what was a diploma course was a 6 years course, the first 3 years, was for the basics, the body exercises, footworks, some basic *mudras* and some expressions, only this was covered. In those 3 years particularly to Kathakali additionally there was only the body massages. This phase is called the *Kuttitharam*. Then it goes to the *Edatharam* which is an inbetween phase, where we learn stories and characters. This is for 2 years.
In the current syllabus, learning about art related topics is not enough,"because without the education we can't go further". Which is why in 1990 we included the school syllabus, which starts in 8th grade and so we had to rework the syllabus structure as we had more time (compared to the diploma) now it was 8 years for a degree and so each section was reworked.

Q - You mentioned the need to change the syllabus, could you elaborate more on this "need"?

A - As I said earlier, it was not time oriented classes back then. I cannot comment on how it was during 1930 because I am not aware of what it was back then. However with the introduction of a school system the syllabus had to be changed to incorporate things. Specific to Kathakali, the person who brought changes was our *Guru Nath* Unni Menon who is responsible for creating the structure for the Kathakali we see today. He took the training methods of old, and made it

concise. For example if a *Guru* said we had to practice a particular footwork a 100 times we had to do it no matter how tired we were, we were not supposed to get tired. We had to overcome it, and so our body would adapt. As the times changed this level of rigorous training is not possible, as the world is changing the atmosphere is itself changing and our body cannot take such rigorous training, and so a syllabus had to be thought of. This is where a student of the previously mentioned Unni Menon, Kunju Nair *Ashaan* brought about the current structure and syllabus to Kathakali.

Q - Do you believe that establishing the Kalamandalam and creating a standardised syllabus Kathakali was able to survive and become a lot more famous?

A - Sure! It was only due to the vision of Vallathol Narayanan Menon, our founder. Kathakali as an art form, at that time was shrinking. In fact, more than Kathakali this was being faced by Mohiniyattam. Kalamandalam was started for Kathakali. The *gurukul sampridayam* would not be viable in the future, was understood by Vallathol Menon, and so he established a place like this. So that is why Kathakali still exists today. The people who have studied here are the ones who have gone taught the same in different institutions, for example in Kotakkal, one of their former teachers was Kunju Nair. Kalamandalams first kallari, is the one that we see here (referring to the kallari behind us). The campus that we are in (old Kalamandalam), was the piece of land, that was given to Vallathol and he established it here. The classes back then were made from coconut leaves stitched together.
Goes on to list other institutions that were founded by students who learnt and passed out from the Kerala Kalamandalam.

Q - Regarding the syllabus, when the institution first came out, where did the literature and theory first come from?

A - First in the *Gurukula Sampradhayam*, during that time there was not a lot of theory. Since it was a visual art form it was through the visuals and practice that we learnt there was no need for theory. Why do we? If this question comes only will we think about something and this is where the importance of theory comes. In those days there were no questions itself so there was no theory. Afterwards, after the establishment started and the thought of needing to preserve these came when we started to analyse then came the need for theory. So what we did, not from the students, but from important persons who are related to the *Gurus*, through them, we approached slowly slowly, looking at their moods and very carefully without them knowing itself we made them talk and gathered information, this we did from various parts and then combined it into a text.

Q - When Kalamandalam was first established, who were the people who came to study here first? Who were the professors?

A - In relation to Kathakali Pattikamthodi Ravunni Menon who was one of the *Mahagurus* of that time was the first teacher for Kathakali, Vallathol brought him here, there were others in different parts as well, but why he was brought was because Pattikamthodi Ravunni Menon after he has studied from his *Guru* he had performed at a lot of stages, however occasionally regarding his acting there was a lot of chatter amongst the audience. So he at the university of that time at Kodungallur, "What is *Natyam*?" He studied. Studying the *Natyashastram* was from the Kodungallur *Kalari.* There was a Sanskrit scholar there named Kunjukuttan Thampuran, he saw him learnt and then applied it to Kathakali, in doing so there itself created a change in the form of Kathakali. From then on is when there was a merging between theory and practicals. This is why he was appointed as the first teacher for this institution and at that time if you have heard about Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, he was the first student, then Anand Sivaram, they are the ones who made Kathakali familiar abroad, like them there were a few people here around 4 or 5, like Guru Gopinad and a few others who studied here. They spread Kathakali to various parts such as Darpana in Gujarat, Shantiniketan and various other places so as Kathakali went to these various places, the art forms of those regions merged and became a new production over there. The basic root of all this was from here (points to the *Kalari*).

Q - So Kalamandalam and Vallathol Narayana Menon were responsible for introducing it to places it was not there before?

A - Sure! Without Vallathol we don't know what would have happened to Kathakali, it was in a more dangerous situation at that time for Mohiniyattam, to deal with that situation Vallathol walked the entirety of Kerala in search for a teacher or for a student and got them from various places. At that time Mohiniyattam was not something that people came to learn, but Vallathol took a risk and approached families and brought people to the institution and started Mohiniyattam over here.

Q - What kind of students come now to learn Kathakali? Is there a change in the type of students? Are women also trying to come?

A - Until recently Kathakali was a male oriented art form, only 2 to 3 years ago was when it was made open for everyone. These are changes that happened due to the changing of the times, however these changes we don't know how long they'll stand firm. We must know about ourselves, as an artist we must have a self assessment of what we are capable of, we must think about this and get into things otherwise just like a school randomly people will come some will be able to complete some won't today the Kalamandalam is stuck in a situation like that. As a government institution there are external things that affect, so we do the best we can, whoever comes into my class I will teach.

Q - So is there a difference in the way the art form was taught in the past and now?

A - Definitely! There are differences at that time, in my own experiences, my *Ashan* when he used to teach us characters, from his perspective and the level to which his student should reach, so for that he used to train us very hard and we had to overcome it. So we faced a lot of difficulties with that, there were times we used to get hit, a good hit! You must think that we are facing this from 4 o clock in the morning, so the stick which we use for the *Thalams* we used to get hit with that. All of that remained only in the walls of the classroom. After the 8 year course was over when we go into our different *Vedis* is when we see those beatings as a boon. So out childhood from that of 13 years we had to suffer to be able to establish ourselves. Nowadays however, we are changing as a campus, where both teachers and students are there and life goes on, the training method of the past is not there. The knowledge has taken many forms not only from the teachers, technology is also there, there are many ways to get knowledge, in a way this is good it depends on how we approach it, there are those who misuse it also. When it comes to an art form, be it Kathakali or music, dance or any other, being next to a *Guru* and learning from them is what is most important. Today in relation to the course with the early morning classes itself there are restrictions coming in place because it is not possible for the kids, they are not able to bear it, it is because of the change in the atmosphere along with other reasons. It is also hostel life here so leaving home at the age of 13 lids are suffering from the difficulties of that, then the heat is also a problem so we give breaks accordingly. They then have the academics from 2:30 to 5 so for a student at the Kalamandalam there isn't a lot of time to rest.

Q - Any final thoughts on how Kalamandalam will continue with Kathakali in the future?

A - The Kalamandalam currently is transforming into a campus so the culture itself is changing. There are high chances of it becoming a University (currently a Deemed to be University). There are a few issues here because of the *sampradhayam* which we used to follow and now shifting, then language is a main problem here because it is standing inside Kerala, however this is changing, and people have started talking, taking me for example, sitting here infront of a camera with the costumes we are prepared to dance and act and do anything but without it and being infront of a camera to talk we become a little introverted. That is because of the training system that used to be here, but that is changing and now with technology an individual is able to learn on their own and make their own observations and learnings so changes along these lines will happen in the Kalamandalam is what I think.

13. Interviewee – HD

- **Designation – Kathakali Maddalam HOD**

I am an alumnus of the institution having specialized in Maddalam. I have completed a 6-year course for the same.

Q. Do you only teach Madalam or any other aspect as well?

A. This is the only instrument I teach and I only teach at the Kalamandalam.

Q. What are the differences you note from learning and teaching here?

A. When I was learning here, there was only a diploma course for Madalam. During that time, teaching the instrument wasn't as detailed and there wasn't enough reach for the university. In the year 2007, there was a change in the curriculum of the institute. There were many additions, notably theoretical aspects leading to the theory balance in the curriculum we find today. The alumni at the time and me were the ones who executed this change to the curriculum. We ensured to consider minute details of all aspects of the theory in an understanding manner. Just how in a typical college, there are adaptations to the syllabi, the same was experienced by us. Moreover, we ensured to maintain the traditional; "paramparic" ways of our institute.

Q. Can you comment on the Guru-shishya Parampara and give an example?

A. There is a lot of technicalities in the teaching here. Just how in a regular class, we read them what they're supposed to do and they follow. However, today, it depends on the mood. There might be syllabus content and schedule on one hand, but when executing it these days, it depends on both the students' and teachers' mood. So, we often improvise the syllabus to keep it friendly in two ways. This improvisation actually helps us understand the students' skills better and help them more specifically.

Q. How has Kalamandalam impacted or made a difference on Kathakali?

A. I'll share something that I am not supposed to say officially… During a particular season, special classes are conducted for wealthy families and communities on mountains. These classes used to be conducted by Kalamandalam, following whom, more institutions started the practice such as Kottyam. But Kathakali's main growth in general has been powered by Kalamandalam due to the systematic processes in place, making it easier to execute.

Q. Could you give specific examples of these processes?

A. Firstly, the students are supposed to live on campus and as I mentioned before about the rich communities and families, those students were also required to stay on site for the classes for 3-4 months after which they are ready to perform along with teachers and seniors. Even today, we have a systematic year schedule wherein till March, we have

classes after which we conduct exams. Students are expected to observe their professors, which is what is tested in the examinations. We also look at how sophisticatedly they perform their postures and Mudras while wearing their costumes and ornaments.

Q. What is the international perspective of Kathakali also considering because of the international intake at the institution?

A. International students who come here are already artists such as dancers, theatre artists, cinema and acting enthusiasts, etc. When they discover and explore Kathakali and Koodiyattam for the first time, it is a big deal for them. More than the locals at times, they are the ones who give it a lot of attention. They respect the art form at a different level and document it quite well. Whereas, in the Indian context, documentation is not that substantial.

Q. Are there differences in Kathakali you can identify because of social media and technology?

A. I don't think social media has any negative impact as such. We are at an age in which social media can help our field to tackle certain issues. It is a good promotional tool because we are getting a platform to which everyone has access to which enables us to get good amount of recognition.

Q. What did he do right after completing his studies from the institute?

A. I practiced in my off season and performed at programs. I was looking for a stable job for over 10 years before teaching at Kalamandalam. In these 10 years, I travelled and performed all over Kerala. Finally, I got the opportunity to rejoin the institute, where I have been for 20 years.

Q. Your students, do they only learn the instrument or also additional aspects of Kathakali?

A. They don't learn the art form completely, rather they learn something called as "Panchvati"; which means different mini forms of dance. It is like an elective; sub course they do along with the instrument training.

Q. From 2-5, do you know what all the students are learning after their practical training?

A. They learn aesthetics, Sanskrit and other B.A. degree courses.

Q. In your time, was this college system of 2-5pm there available to you?

A. For us, rather than theoretical study during that time, 2-5pm was the time for practical training in Kalaris. From 8:30-3:00pm at the time, we had "Sadagams" following which we had our practical and even at times night classes. During the nighttime, they would sit and orate the Taalams. Even today from the September and October season, there are few night classes for Chendas and Taalams for an hour or two. During this season as well, we have an average of 100 performances which we conduct showcasing our learnings.

Q. Do you think the hostel life and this pedagogy are impactful in any way?

A. Yes. This is because Kalamandalam has immediate access to plenty resources which the students can avail at ease. Moreover, living with their peers promotes companionship and encourages peer learning which is a positive impact.

Q. What is the age range and class size for your classes?

A. Approximately 36 students and the age range is from students studying in 8^{th} grade to M.A. courses

14. Interviewee and designation - Professor and alumnus

Q - How many years have you been teaching at the Kalamandalam

A - So I shall start by telling a bit about myself. Namaskaram! My name is Kalamandalam Vivek, in 2007 I joined the Kalamandalam to practice Kathakali, after that along with my ___ education I had taken up studying Kathakali, in 2007 I joined here in the 8th grade and then completed my degree and also did my further studies such as my PG and then mphil. After completing that for 2 years I have become a temporary teacher over here.
I came to Kalamandalam because of my father. My father Thiruvataar Jagadish was a Kathakali artist, so because of his words is why I got to know about the prestigious institution that is the Kalamandalam and also got an interest towards Kathakali because of him.

The Kalamandalam was established in 1930 by Vallathol Narayana Menon, it was a great contribution by him, the institute has greatly contributed to Kathakali. To keep an art form such as Kathakali from fading and from ensuring that it lasts for generations, Vallathol and Mannakkulam Mukunda Raja with their determination established this institution. From then on in 1930 to now in 2024 the institute has been running successfully as the years went on 13 other art forms were introduced and so now there are 14 art forms or faculty at the Kalamandalam.

Q - Do you teach theory?

A - Yes along with the practicals we also teach theory for Kathakali

Q - So from what time do you teach practicals and what time do you teach theory?

A - the teaching style at the Kalamandalam is in the morning from 4:30 to 6:30 we have the sadhagams which is the practice time and during the rainy season we have body massages which is around June July after that in the following months we have Kannu sadhagam (eye exercises). Then after 6:30 from 9 to 12:30 we have the Kathakali classes. From 9 to 11 we have Cholliatam which is class with the Chenda, Maddalam, and Sangeetham, after that we have the Mutti class where we teach the rhythm, to understand the art form we first start with this (learning and understanding the rhythm) and then only move on to the Kalaris where we do the Cholli. After this is in the time we have left we will give them notes about the field that they are learning, we will give them the background, what it is, what happens, what is the story, who wrote the story, etc. all of these theory is taught in the Mutti classes which happens 1-2 times a week. It is mostly practical focused over here, so our focus is there but we also give time for theory in class. Along with this there is also the sahithyam which is the literature of Kathakali that is also taught to them, relating to what Kathakali is and about its plays so we give classes for the same.

Q - Apart from the Kalamandalam in another institute where they teach Kathakali, do they teach the same way? Is there a standardization?

A - Apart from the Kalamandalam, Margi in Thiruvananthapuram, Kalanilayam in Irinjalakuda, Kottakal PSV Natyasangham and Sadanam. These are the 4 primary institutes of teaching Kathakali, in these institutes the way of teaching is the same but there is a difference in the timing structure. So all of this pertaining to Kathakali as a subject is all the same, only the stylistic differences. So the classes are similar, the Kalamandalam is a little more prestigious and well known in kerala. So people tend to want to come and join here, also over here we provide the schooling facilities which the other institutes do not. Over there you will have to go to external schools.

Q - Is there a difference between the Kathakali that was there before the Kalamandalam and the Kathakali after?

A - Definitely! The art form before the institute was in its primitive state, it was derived from Ramanattam which was an art form where the story was told orally/spoken. After that Kottayathu Thampuran, Kaplingatu Nambodhiri, Kottarakara Thampuran, like this many esteemed individuals are the ones who have contributed to the Kathakali we see today. There are changes that have happened due to the changing of the times. The way Kathakali existed then would not be possible in our generation today, it simply would not be possible. The changes that have happened to Kathakali as the generations went on is the reason that Kathakali has become popular today.

Q - Do you think that these changes happened because of the Kalamandalam.

A - Definitely! Without the establishment of an institution such as the Kalamandalam, Kathakali as an art form may not even exist today. To preserve Kathakali is why Vallathol established this institute in 1930, maybe it would have existed but not in the way we see it today.

Q - So the stories in Kathakali are from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, but in recent times there are new stories such as those of Shakespeare. What are your opinions on that?

A - So the existence of Kathakali currently is because of the stories from epics such as the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Bhagavad Gita
New expressions be it from Shakunthala, Shakespeare, Othello, from other greek plays we have started experimenting. Even christian stories such as stories of Christ has also been incorporated into Kathakali. Even other poems have been tried. These aren't any bad things, just some new reforms that we can bring to the art form.

Q - What is the one quality or skill a student of Kathakali needs?

A - So when learning Kathakali the primary/most important quality of a student is the ability to grasp what is told to them quickly, their ability to understand the rhythm, then the figure which is one of the main components of Kathakali, it is what acts as a base for the beauty of the costumes, so big face, big eyes, a wide face is also good. There are those who do this without these attributes also, but these are just something we look out for.

15. Interviewee and designation – Kathakali make up and costumes professor

Q. How long have you taught at the Kalamandalam?

A. 5 years, before which I was a student. He is a first generation teacher in his family.

Q. What are the difficulties you found between being a learner and a teacher?

A. I found a huge generational gap from the time when I was a learner and a teacher. When I was a student, I didn't have access to resources such as technology and devices.

Q. What are the class timings and how is a typical day?

A. The main classes for the course take place in Kalaris and usually timings are from 9-12:30pm. After that, the classes for the normal courses take place.

Q. What are the other normal courses?

A. Normal classes include regular academic subjects such as English, Malayalam and other degree studies. The classes for the same usually begin at 2 and end at 5.

Q. Do you and the students make your own ornaments for Kathakali?

A. Usually, we take students who are in 8^{th} grade, starting by teaching them how to do make up which is taught by their seniors on rock. The base for the makeup on the rock is usually rice with which these students are trained. Only after enough practice, they move on to do the make up on faces. This is their first step in development in their course. It is only after they learn makeup that they start dealing with ornaments. Usually, the transition from learning on a rock to working on faces takes 3 years. Pots can also be used with rock.

Q. Do you have any control over the teaching and curriculum? Is it influenced by the management?

A. Yes, we do have control. It is controlled primarily by our HODs.

Q. Do you think the art form of Kathakali has changed from when you were a learner to now that you're a teacher?

A. So, we as an aspect and from my personal experience of Kathakali are backstage during performance so there hasn't been much change.

Q. So, there has been no change in the backstage proceedings of a performance?

A. As generations pass by, there has been some change. Social media has played a huge role. For example, when we used do facial make up today compared to 10 years back, we have become more strict and conscious about it since photography in social media captures it and this in a sense has highlighted make up and given it importance.

Q. Roughly, how many students are in your class?

A. 18

Q. The make up that is done here, do you do it any differently compared to other institutions?

A. No, make up for Kathakali is strictly followed to be same almost everywhere. The only probable differences are caused due to language, for example, in Kerala itself, certain words have different ways of speech, similarly in the make up aspects there might be small differences in execution of the make-up.

Q. Has Kalamandalam standardized proceedings of Kathakali?

A. Yes, for example, the uniformity in the ornaments and the way they're worn in Koodiyattam is brought in by Kalamandalam. Koodiyattam as an art form originate and develop from different families (Kudumbangal). Kalamandalam has helped uniformed the differences that sprout due to the different sources of origin.

Q. Is the make up of Kathakali taught only at institutions such as Kalamandalam or individual artists also teach the same?

A. Usually, makeup is taught in big institutions however if an artist is well known and accomplished, they might be teaching on their own. Currently, there are 10-15 artists active in this field. These 10-15 artists must've started as performers, turned artists later in their career.

6. Interviewee - Kalamandalam Sindhu

- **Designation - Professor**

Q – How long have you been at Kalamandalam?

A – 7 years

Q – Were you a student over here?

A – Yes, I studied here. 1992 onwards till 1999.

Q – Are you the first teacher in your family?

A – My father was a theatre actor.

Q – Why did you choose to teach at the Kalamandalam?

A – I have been teaching at the Kalamandalam only for 7 years. Before that I had worked in many other institutions, because I hadn't got the chance to work here before that, so I had worked in Thiruvananthapuram for 10 years and before that in many other Gurukuls I have worked.

Q – So how many students in your class on average?

A – This year I have only 3 students.

Q – and what about the class timings and schedule like approximately?

A – In the mornings, that is early mornings there are sadhagam classes for an hour and a half, that is 5:30 to 6:30 and then from 9 to 12:30

Q – You're a professor of Koodiyatam correct?

A – We can't say professor, as I am just a temporary faculty over here, there aren't a lot of permanent female faculty for Koodiyatam over here, most of us are temporary.

Q – is there a difference from when you were a student to now?

A – There is the difference of the times. Todays kids have a lot more freedom, and the teachers are a lot more student friendly. When I was studying the opportunities I got to see Koodiyatam over here were more, now the people who learnt here leave and go. Back then there were only a few students, in my batch it was just me and one other girl, nowadays there are a lot more, so back then our teachers used to take us to performances that were happening even outside the kalamandamlam like at a temple or so, but now due to there being a lot more students the opportunities for them to go outside and watch performances are lower.

The relationship between the teachers and the students have changed. In the past there was more fear, devotion, respect that the teachers could inculcate into the students but in todays kids it is not possible, and not only that we used to stand by our teachers with fear and be afraid to question them. Kids nowadays are a lot more open and not afraid to ask questions, and in relation to studying, nowadays the seriousness towards it is less compared to before they are a lot more casual about it only a few of them show high levels of seriousness.

Q - What about in the way teachers teach?

A – Yes there is a stark difference, in my time we used to be disciplined and taught, but now that is not there we have to be student friendly. The syllabus itself was different, at that time the Kalamandalam had not become a university and it offered a diploma course, only after a few years did it become a university and then what we learnt in 4 years for diploma is now taught for 8 years as a degree. We had to learn a lot in 4 years but now it has been extended for the degree. They have a lot more years to study now compared to back then, and now the teachers were a lot stricter, there was not a lot of kindness from their side.

Q – You mentioned that the syllabus was spread out or extended, why did they do this?

A – When it became a university, they had to give a different syllabus to degree, and a different one to MA so for this the course was divided.

Q – When you were studying you only had a diploma course, compared to now, which one do you think is better and what are the advantages and disadvantages?

A – Both have its advantages, practically the course in the past was more advantageous, we only thought about how we can perform on stage with the precise form, we didn't learn anything theoretically, but now with seminars, assignments and the opportunity to get books. Back then we had no books for Koodiyatam, so we had no theoretical knowledge. So now they are now more knowledgeable theoretically but when it comes to the practical side it not be as precise as the past. Both are good with respect to their advantages, however for those who got a diploma they have no value, people who have degrees and done their MA are who get value. The certificate is very valuable, they don't see what is being performed on stage rather they look at the certificate.

Q - In your class do you focus more on theory, or training?

A – We focus on both, I teach 10th grade students, till last year I taught the degree final years. In each year there a set amount of parts that we have to teach which is given to us by the syllabus, it has theory and practical.

Q – How is that decided, is it by the management or teachers?

A – It is already decided by the Masters before us who had given it to us.

Q – So it is the same as that of the past?

A – Yes, it is just that now theory has been added, otherwise there aren't that many differences I'm what the kids study, for practical. The kids here receive theoretical knowledge as part of the syllabus, whereas we had to read up on books afterwards.

Q – Has technology affected your teaching?

A – From the kids end it has, they have become addicted to the phone, so this has affected their concentration towards their studies. They look for the easy way in everything. With the coming of technology they have many ways to become established, such as through reels and social media, whereas we had to go around and perform in multiple stages to become established. So sometimes instead of focusing on studying they try to make content for reels and social media.

Q - Apart from that has it been used to teach, for example if you wanted to show them something then you can now use YouTube to show it?

A – We have asked for these facilities from the institution, at least show them a few performances once a week because they do not get to go out very often and see these performances. They haven't given it us as of yet but they will in the future. This is because currently the institution has a few limitations currently and it is in the stage of becoming a university from a deemed to be university. They had asked us for our opinions, and we have given them suggestions, it will just take a bit of time to implement them.

Q - You had mentioned the differences between the students of the past and now, so how does the institution manage this balance between tradition and newer teaching methods.

A – Yes this is a big challenge currently, as the individuals who were taught using the traditional ways of the past have picked up on not only the learnings of their art form but have also picked

up the behaviour of their teachers. There are those that deviate from this and become, friendly to their students.
The institution even now is trying to bring about the essence of the Gurukul system of the past while being student friendly. Whatever knowledge has flourished beautifully in the Kalamandalam since it began has to be passed on to the kids the same however while not causing any pain to them. We have to think from the student's side, and they have even given us orientation classes for the same.

Q - You had mentioned that you had taught in other institutes prior to the Kalamandalam, what differences are there in teaching in other institutes compared to teaching at the Kalamandalam.

A – The ones outside were private run institutions and those usually have classes on the weekend's full day and only evening classes during the week. There isn't much difference in teaching, its just that those students go outside to study, whereas over here it is inside the institution itself. The Kalamndalam has all the resources within the institute, they also have the opportunity to watch a lot of performances from other artists as the Kalamandalam hosts a lot of performances. The opportunities that the private institute get are that of being able to get a stage to perform as there aren't a lot of kids, so they are able to provide them with the stage to perform more frequently.

16. Interviewee - T.K.

- **Designation - Senior professor**

Q - Could you introduce yourself?

A - My name is Thulasikumar, I joined here in 1996 to study, and I got a job first in RV college, Thripunathura and in 2017 I joined as faculty here.

Q - How long did you study here for?

A - 96 to 2011

Q - What is your teaching philosophy? What sort of qualities do you want your student to have?

A - Thats a good question (laughs) I teach Kathakali, a very practical oriented art form, mainly what we need as it is a performing art is the proper conditioning of the body, achieving this is my first task i.e getting their body prepared for kathakali as an art form. next there is literature for kathakali, the meaning of this literature is what they convey through their hand gestures. My work is to teach them in a way that is most helpful to them.

Back when I was studying, it was self-study, we had to understand on our own. I also make it a point to teach the literature, the story behind the literature and what the character is trying to emulate, because this was not the teaching I received. At this particular stage the current students are not agreeable towards learning through hardships and struggles, particularly the strain on the body. When we were taught there used to be "shikshanam" (discipline), we learnt a few things out of fear for the same, nowadays we cannot use the same methods while teaching. Thats why we as teachers are also struggling to come up with ways on how to convey the teachings to the students, that is why we now simplify all aspects from body moments, to eye movements, to "mudras" and even the literature. in the future we can only teach this art form if we perfect this simplification will students join and stay at these institutes.

Q - On a scale of 1 to 10 how important is theory literature in becoming a good kathakali performer?

A - Without literature there is no presentation of Kathakali, it is the meaning of the literature that is being presented while performing. It is a 100 percent important. learning the literature helps in understanding the character and the story. it is equally as important as practicals.

Q - From when you were learning to now how has the art form changed?

A - Not a lot of changes have occurred. because it is not an art form that has a lot of scope to change. because it has a particular structure that has held its ground as a dance drama form for a long time, and years to come. The plots of the story can change, from initially being stories only from the mahabharata and ramayana it is now incorporating other stories like those of shakespeare.

Q - When students first join from other institutes, do you see that there are things that you have to reteach them as they are wrong? Can you give an example?

A - Yes, so initially when we did not have literature studies the meanings of certain words did not correspond to the actions performed. the different meanings of literature can have mistakes, for example when you read literature you learn it and understand it in your own way, My teacher taught me the meanings the way he understood and learnt them. Then later on when I grew up and read the texts I got new meanings and understandings for the same. There are certain things we were taught such as "wherever your hands go your eyes should follow" however we were not taught why it was done so. After reading the Natyashastra and other texts is finally when you understand why we do as such. After ganing this understanding, i explain it to my students.

(demonstrates an example)

Q - So this difference that you mentioned between the way you studied and how it is now, could you speak about this difference?

A - This is where Kathakali as an art form when it was institutionalised, we had to give a shape and form to everything, we had to form a syllabus and curriculum for it. When this happened we had to add new texts to the institution, earlier we didn't have to do this, we had to learn orally in those times and whatever the teacher said was byhearted and adhered to without any question. today it is not like that if we have to perform a story, we have to learn the literature, its acting methods, in what texts has it been described, thats when all the aspects are truly understood. These changes are what happens when it became a more college like setting.

Q - If there are two students who learns for many years in the Kalamandalam, and another student from a different institution who studied for the same amount of years, is there a difference in their dance styles?

A - Nowadays there are no differences, because the teachers are all alumni who have studied the same courses at the Kalamandalam, so because of that we don't see big differences. even kids who studied from before, do a lot of hardwork and perform equally to the graduates of the Kalamandalam. additionally like i mentioned before, students who study outside do not use texts as much, the students of the Kalamandalam are able to perform any particular story from any literature at a moments notice, as they practice and learn the same from here. the ones who study outside, only learn the characters of the role they are going to perform and cannot perform other characters of the story.

Q - can you just talk about changes that you have seen from when you were a student here to now?

A - Many changes are there. Firstly, lights and sounds, when we were studying all performances were under a lamp, where as now the light adds a lot to the views. Back then, because we used a lamp, the things were made only where the audience could see with the light of the lamp with specific reference to the size and depth to the costumes. With the incoming of lights, the entire stage was visible at once to the audience, the costumes were before and more elaborately designed. Presence on stage also increased with the coming of lights.
Using social media platforms, we are able to see and view other dance and art forms which allow us to incorporate new learnings and create new choreographies into our own fields.

Q - Different kallaris brought in different styles to the same art form, at the unification of the same at the Kalamandalam, which kallari is most prominent?

A - Initially, the most prominent were those kallaris that were located close to the Kalamandalam, but in recent times after the joining of the southern style of Kathakali of the southern kallaris, there are two separate and distinct teaching forms of kathakali at the institution.

Q - What is your opinion on establishment of the institution?

A - To generate appreciation for Mohiniattam and kathakali is why this institution was established. He brought together multiple styles for this purpose. Without this establishment these styles would have deviated from the original and lost its meaning. With the institution came a curriculum and a syllabus which helped in unifying the different art forms. The reason for the significance given to the art forms is because the establishment. The reason that you are here conducting research here is also because of this structure. Now that foreigners and Indians come

here to learn the art form, this implies that the institute has helped in spreading the word about Kathakali.

Q - Balancing traditional and modern values within the Kathakali. For example with the guru shishya system.

A - It is only in name that we use the guru shishya system. It was only during that time period that we used that term, nowadays we do not follow it rather, we are now functioning just like a normal college would. There are only a few kids who complete their full education and pass out from here. It is not like before how the students would be made to struggle listen to their gurus and obey their gurus blindly, todays students are not ready to do the same. If we even change our behaviour towards them it can lead to many problems. Despite it being said to be followed by the Kalamandalam in my opinion it is not so and it functions as a normal college itself, where the teacher comes, teaches, the students come and learn. There is no personal connect or discussions which happen, back when I was a student, my teachers used to be aware of and if necessary get involved in some of my personal matters too, now there is no room for the same. The teacher teaches and as long as it is within their teaching capacity, give information to the students. In my opinion, its only guru shishya parampara in name and not in actuality.

Q - Which of the two methods is more effective in your opinion?

A - Both ways are good and come with their own benefits. Both ways have graduating students who excel. But sometimes I get the feeling that the olden methods of teaching were better, as that enforced the more practical aspects of the art form which is a necessity considering the fact that the art itself is very practical in nature. Without the aches and pains that come as a result of the hard work put in there is no real progress. Back in those days, with the old system, there was a small sense of fear that came as a result of the strict discipline which allowed us to at least attempt to get the form and mudras right, if not do so to perfection. Today there is no such thing, but even then there are students who study in the current system and come out excelling in the field. Both are happening together, and have their own set of advantages and disadvantages.